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Write Your Way To A New Career!

Writers Bureau Celebrates Twenty-three Years of Helping New Writers

by Nick Daws

Hazel McHaffie

Tim Skelton

When distance-learning pioneer Ernest Metcalfe founded The Writers Bureau in the late 1980s, he can hardly have dared hope that twenty-three years on it would be acknowledged as Britain's leading writing school. Yet so it proved, with thousands of Writers Bureau students seeing their work in print for the first time. And, for many of those who persevered with their writing, the dream of becoming a successful writer has turned into reality.

Students such as Tim Skelton. An engineer by profession, he had always harboured an ambition to write, and at the age of 40 signed up with The Writers Bureau. The decision changed his life: "My writing career took off exponentially. I started appearing regularly in lifestyle and in-flight magazines. The following year I was commissioned by Bradt Travel Guides to write a guidebook to Luxembourg. I've appeared in The Times and The Independent, and updated guidebooks for Fodor's, Thomas Cook, and the AA."

> *"My writing career took off exponentially."*

Another student who benefited was Hazel McHaffie. Hazel wanted to make her academic work in Medical Ethics more accessible to people, and decided to write the themes into novels. Following her Writers Bureau course, Hazel has had five novels published, and appeared at the Edinburgh International Book Festival. She also has her own website at www.hazelmchaffie.com.

Sometimes studying with The Writers Bureau takes students down new and unexpected paths. Patricia Holness originally enrolled on The Writers Bureau's Writing for Children course. However, she soon realised that what she was learning applied to other types of writing as well.

She is now a full-time writer, regularly selling short stories for both children and adults. She also has a monthly column in Devon Life.

These are just a selection from the inspirational true stories from students of The Writers Bureau. There's no reason why YOU couldn't be their next success story. With a 15-day free trial and money-back guarantee, there is nothing to lose and potentially a whole new career to gain! So why not visit their website at www.writersbureau.com or call on Freephone 0800 856 2008 for more information?

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Christina Jones, Oxfordshire

"So far, I have had eighteen novels published. The Writers Bureau helped make this possible for me. Within six months of enrolling on my course I was having work commissioned by editors and I still work regularly for magazines."

Michael Foley, Essex

"Completing The Writers Bureau course has made it possible for me to attain my life-long ambition of becoming a published writer. The level of success I have achieved has far outweighed what I was hoping for when beginning the course. By the end of this year I should have eight books already published and hopefully two more finished."

Cindy-Lou Dale, Kent

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As a goose-eating monster lurks in the waters of London's Olympic Park, **NEIL ARNOLD** considers the long line of unlikely beasts – from alligators and giant catfish to sharks and sea serpents – spotted in the capital's great river and its tributaries.

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For all the hype surrounding London 2012, the original Greek Games were undeniably much more fun, what with naked wrestlers, lethal trumpet contests, multiple chariot pile-ups and boxers who turned into wolves. **BARRY BALDWIN** celebrates the outrageous oddities and farcial fatalities of the ancient Olympics.

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PART 1: THE LAZARUS SYNDROME

When footballer Fabrice Muamba collapsed on the pitch and his heart stopped for a full 78 minutes, his subsequent recovery was hailed as a miracle – not least by Muamba himself – but his experience was far from unique. **TED HARRISON** considers a number of recent cases in which being pronounced dead is not the end of the story.

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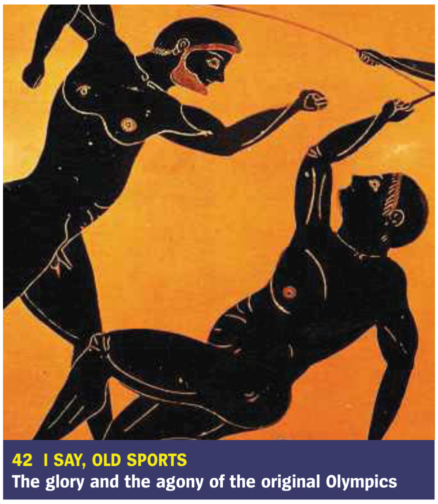
GETTY IMAGES / MICHAEL STEELE

48 KNOCKIN' ON HEAVEN'S DOOR
When being pronounced dead is not the end of the story



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GETTY IMAGES / DAVID POULTNEY

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COVER IMAGE: CHRIS SMITH

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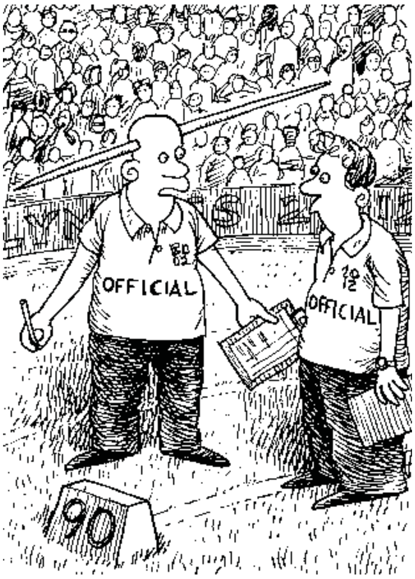
editorial

Cryptids, conspiracies, cannibals

As we brace ourselves for the London 2012 Games, we thought we'd take the opportunity to wish Olympians of every nation the best of luck… and remind them of what they've got to live (or die) up to in the pursuit of sporting glory. Our resident classicist Barry Baldwin has dusted off his discus and entered the fray, bringing his erudition to bear on the sheer danger involved in the the Ancient Games (pp42–47). Bollock-squeezing wrestlers, runners dying from exhaustion, deadly trumpet-playing competitions and mass chariot pile-ups were just some of the fatalities one could meet with. Do our current crop of contenders know just how easy they have it these days?



"Am I going mad, Terry? Where the hell did it go?"

MARTIN ROSS

Perhaps they should also be warned of the terror lurking in the murky river running through the Olympic Park. Something has been pulling full-grown Canada geese down to a watery grave in the River Lea. Intrepid cryptozoologist Richard Freeman went in search of the 'Olympic Monster' in its native habitat, while Neil Arnold uncovers the long and little-known history of unusual, unlikely and sometimes downright impossible fauna recorded in the Thames and its tributaries over the years (pp30–37).

And perhaps there's something more sinister than a goose-eating monster to worry about. The London Olympics has generated conspiracy theories ever since the first appearance of the controversial 'London 2012' logo and the weird 'alien' Olympic mascots set online forums ablaze with speculation about the 'true' meaning of the event. Has a terrorist atrocity been foretold in a collectible card game? Or revealed by hidden meanings in an episode of *The Simpsons*? Should we brace ourselves for an alien invasion? Or be prepared for an Illuminati coup? The clues are there for those who know where to look, say the conspiracy theorists – from significant place names around the Olympic site to hints of the alien apocalypse in official videos; see pp14–15, and don't say you haven't been warned…

ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE?

We'd already prepared a round-up of recent cannibal activity (pp26–27) for this issue before a number of particularly disturbing new incidents fuelled much Internet talk of a 'zombie apocalypse'. The story of a crazed, naked cannibal eating a homeless man's face under a Miami freeway was straight out of George Romero, while that of the porn star killer who posted bits of his victim to Canadian politicians sounded more like something from a torture porn movie. But the idea that these and other cases represent some kind of 'epidemic' is surely misguided. America's Center for Disease Control and Protection hadn't helped matters by issuing a number of tongue-in-cheek fact sheets about what to do when the walking dead invade your town or city; the body has since said that these were merely "disaster preparedness" stunts and that it "does not know of a virus or condition that would reanimate the dead (or one that would present zombie-like symptoms)" (*The Huffington Post, 6 June 2012*). Presumably, it has been the location of this rash of horrific incidents in the US, whose entertainment business has been enamoured with the figure of the zombie in recent years, that has prompted such levels of online jollity and talk of an 'epidemic'. A flick through *FT*'s archive would reveal that while eating people is undoubtedly wrong, it's been going on for years – just not always in Uncle Sam's back yard.

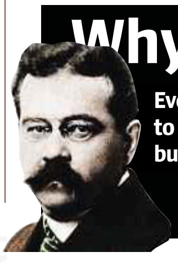
ERRATUM

FT289:43 The author photo accompanying "Amelia's Last Flight" was of Jonathan Turner and not of the writer, Duncan E Turner, who in fact looks like this. We would like to apologise to both of our misidentified contributors for this mix-up.

DAVID SUTTON

BOB RICKARD

PAUL SIEVEKING



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Everything you always wanted to know about *Fortean Times* but were too paranoid to ask!

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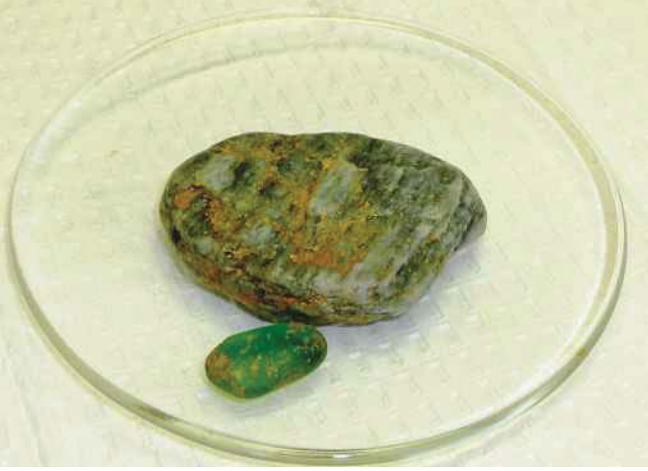
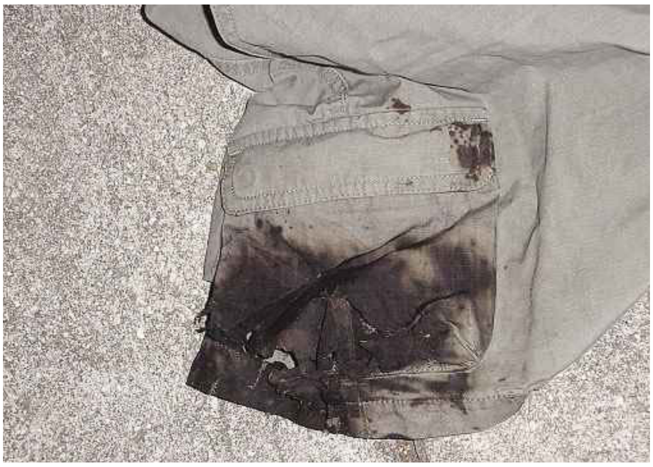
A DIGEST OF THE WORLDWIDE WEIRD

strangedays

Hot rocks burn woman

Stones picked up on a California beach heat up in pocket, causing damage and severe injury





BOTH PIX: ORANGE COUNTY FIRE AUTHORITY

On 12 May, Lyn Hiner, 43, enjoyed a day with her family at Trestles Beach, at the mouth of the San Mateo Creek, near San Diego in California. During the visit, her daughters collected seven small orange and green rocks (above left), and she put them in the right pocket of her shorts to carry home. The aptly named Captain Marc Stone, of Orange County Fire Authority, said that Mrs Hiner began to feel intense heat from her pocket as she stood in the kitchen of her San Clemente home, about four hours after putting the rocks there. Her clothing and skin began to burn as the heat intensified; she also suffered second-degree burns to her hand on trying to remove the rocks. Her husband also received second-degree burns to his hand as he tried to help her. Eventually, she got the shorts off, but the rocks burnt through the fabric (above right) and continued to smoulder on the kitchen's wooden floor, filling the house with smoke. The paramedic who treated the couple said he had seen nothing like it in 27 years. Mrs Hiner underwent surgery for severe second and third degree burns to her right thigh and right arm at Western Medical Center in Santa Ana.

Captain Stone said the rocks were being examined, but the results were not expected for several weeks. "There is phosphorus that naturally occurs on the sand at the beach," he said, "but no one has ever heard of pants catching fire." Phosphate-bearing rocks, or phosphorites, are usually deposited by sediment – dissolved phosphorus from continental weathering that rivers carry to the sea. It was suggested that, if the rocks did contain phosphates (compounds containing phosphorous and oxygen), they could have rubbed together in the woman's pocket, setting off a chemical chain reaction; but this sounds far-fetched, as pure phosphorus ignites when exposed to oxygen, which is why it must be kept in oil in laboratories. *Orange County (CA) Register, 16 May; KABC-TV, dailymail.co.uk, 17 May 2012.*

Fire down below

A few months ago, a new effort was under way to put out a fire that has been burning in central Utah for the last 70 years. The underground coal fire was first reported in 1941 by miners working in the Maclean Mine, part of a complex of old coal workings in Spring Canyon a few miles outside Helper. It probably started by spontaneous combustion, and it forced the closure of the Maclean Mine in 1945. No one seriously tried to do anything about it until 1989 when it set trees ablaze. The attempts to extinguish it over the past two decades failed – although temperatures recorded in drill holes dropped from 2,500°F (1,370°C) to 500°F (260°C). Levels of carbon monoxide and hydrogen sulphide deep in the ground remain potentially deadly.

Last November, state contractors moved in with heavy equipment, mixing sand, cement, ash and foam into a form of grout. In all, they expected to pump 14,000 cubic yards (10,700 cubic metres) of the stuff into the ground through drill holes and cracks, aiming to suffocate the fire by cutting off its oxygen supply. We have yet to hear whether the operation has been successful. It is one of about two dozen documented coal fires that have been burning for years in Utah. *KSL 5 News (Utah), 4 Nov 2011.*

Fires raging underground are found all over the world; these are the real hell fires. For example, 20 years ago in the 175 square miles (453 sq km) of the Jharia coalfields in eastern India, there were 65 major subterranean fires, some of which had been burning since 1916. By 1993, they had consumed an estimated 37 million tons of coking coal. About 1.9 billion more tons, or more than 18 per cent of India's known coking coal reserves, were rendered inaccessible. A similar situation pertains in China's coalfields: one fire in the Baiyanghe coalfield in Xinjiang, put out in 1997, had been burning since 1560 [**FT108:6**]. For more examples, see **FT12:4, 73:23**.

WE HAVE LIFTOFF! Can private enterprise boldly go into outer space? **PAGE 16**

BABY, LIGHT MY FIRE An 11-year-old girl is said to burn objects by brain power **PAGE 20**

HUNGER FOR HUMANKIND Cannibal cases continue to shock across the world **PAGE 26**

More twin telepathy?

Did one brother's headaches warn of the other's brain tumour?

Identical twins Craig and Brenton Gurney, 38, residents of Sydney, New South Wales, were inseparable as children, shared a bedroom until they were 22, and played in the same soccer team since they were five. They both ended up marrying women named Nicole.

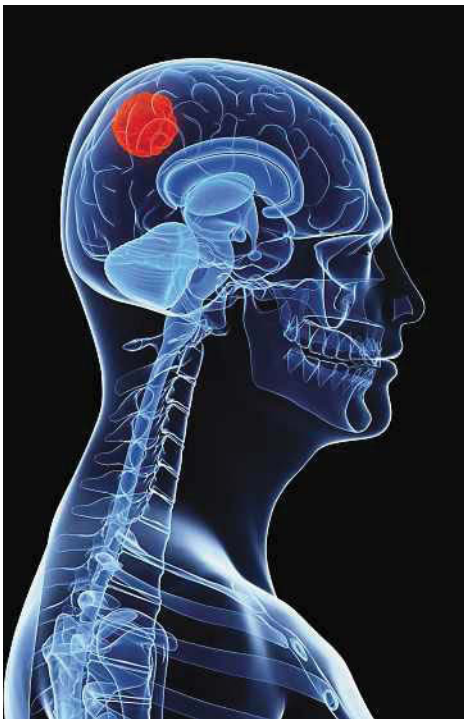
If telepathy exists between twins – and there is much evidence that it does – it was Craig who was the intuitive one. From 2,700km (1,680 miles) away he once divined when his brother had a life-threatening mystery rash, and when he had dislocated his shoulder.

Last year, however, the twins' roles were reversed. Brenton started getting persistent headaches and persuaded hale and hearty Craig to join a study of twins (looking into mental health and resilience) organised by the Brain Dynamics Centre at the University of Sydney, because it included an MRI scan.

The scan picked up no abnormality in Brenton's brain; but Craig, who never suffered headaches, discovered he had a massive and rare tumour in the base of his skull. "I was hoping they had mixed up the MRI results and got the wrong twin," said Brenton.

Craig underwent a complex 10½-hour operation at Westmead Private Hospital to remove the 4.2cm (1.7in) tumour, and recovered after two months of intensive radiation therapy. "I thought I was participating in a research study as a way of helping others but as it turned out it helped save my life," he said. *Sydney Morning Herald, 21 May 2012.*

For a feature on twin telepathy by Guy Lyon Playfair, see **FT171:34–40.**



SEBASTIAN KAVLITZKI / ALAMY

EXTRA! EXTRA!

FT'S FAVOURITE HEADLINES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

Germany ready to inseminate you, minister says

The Local (Sweden), 28 Nov 2011.

ET's underpants, semen not tested

IOL News, 21 Oct 2011.

Death will remain a mystery

Jersey Eve. Post, 7 Dec 2011.

Heaven ordered to close earlier

Adelaide Advertiser, 14 Oct 2011.

After five years, a bus comes along

Halifax Eve. Courier, 31 Oct 2011.

Donkeys get hammered

Weston Mercury, 8 Dec 2011.

Move to gag geese

(Adelaide) Sunday Mail, 11 Dec 2011.

ROOF NUT SHOT TWO OVER CONE

D.Star, 7 Dec 2011.

Granny killer loses appeal

(Queensland) Courier-Mail, 28 Oct 2011.

Ordinary delights

EVERYBODY NEEDS A HOBBY, THEY SAY, BUT SOME PEOPLE'S IDEA OF 'FASCINATING' MIGHT NOT GRAB YOU

● James Ward of Kingston, southwest London, organised a one-day conference, Boring 2011, on 19 November last year in east London – a gathering dedicated to the delights of the mundane, obvious and overlooked. He had founded the event in 2010 as a joke on Twitter following the cancellation of a rival "interesting" conference. Four hundred tickets for the 2011 conference were sold in advance (double the final gate of the previous year), and Ward was worried that the whole thing was in danger of becoming too interesting. Rhodri Marsden, who planned to discuss his inability to make small talk, said anyone expecting to be bored would be let down. Topics in the morning included toilets and electric handdryers, and after lunch there was a seminar on the square root of two and a talk on civil aircraft. There was also "an attempt at calculating the tonnage of crisps eaten by one individual in a year". The day finished with discussions on vending machines and concrete overpasses. *Sun, 9 Nov; Irish Independent, 19 Nov 2011.*

● Also last November, the winner of Fence Factor was announced. The proud owner of Britain's best fence is farmer Gary Harrison from Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk. His fence offers a spectacular view of the field behind his house. Mr Harrison, 37, beat 50 other fence owners to win what was dubbed "the most boring competition ever". *Metro, 9 Nov 2011.*

● Last December, the website localtraders.com organised what it claimed to be the first "watching paint dry championships". A statement read: "After so many sporting disappointments, we're keen to invent a sport which England can excel at and watching paint dry could be just the thing." Potential champions were asked to send pictures of themselves watching paint, with a claim of the longest time they've looked at a wall of the stuff drying without looking away. *Sunday Times, 18 Dec 2011.*

● James Brown, 32, (not *FT*'s erstwhile publisher) has blown £50,000 to become the nation's number one collector of vacuum cleaners. He repairs them for a living, keeps 130 models at his shop in Heanor, Derbyshire, and has another 70 more valuable types at home. The oldest is a Hoover 700 from 1926. He got his first model – a Goblin 800 – when he was 10. "Everyone always ask why I collect them, but I haven't got a definitive answer," he said. *Sun, 18 Feb 2012.* Another obsessive vacuum cleaner collector is James Copp from Wiltshire [**FT279:22**]. For other eccentric collectors, see **FT265:18–19, 268:22, 277:24–25**.

● Peter Willis, 67, a retired Royal Mail manager from Worcester, travels all over the country photographing mailboxes (facing page). He has snapped 2,500 in the last five years, on his way to "collecting" all 115,000 in the UK and Ireland. He located the pillar-boxes thanks to a Royal Mail database, and has programmed his car's satnav to beep every time he passes one. His wife Dianne, 64, joins him on his mailbox holiday tours. "Dianne often stands guard if I'm in the middle of the road taking pictures as I get down on my hands and knees to record the bases, which have details of the manufacturers," he said. "She is usually consoling passers-by that I'm not actually mad. It all started out as a hobby, but has developed into an obsession." Mr Willis admits that one of his favourites – at Newcastle railway station – "looks very bland". Others in his top 10 include one under Edinburgh Castle and one at Liverpool's Albert Dock that "gave me a chuckle" (maybe you had to be there). He is also proud about living near one of only 160 mailboxes in the country to bear the insignia of Edward VIII. *D.Mirror, Sun, 11 May 2012.* **PHOTOS:** SWNS

● Kevin Beresford, 60, has published calendars featuring the roundabouts of Birmingham and insane asylums of England. The 2011 calendar had views from Birmingham's outer circle number 11 bus route, and so does this year's calendar, although the pictures are different. "The 2012 calendar depicts pictures taken during the anti-clockwise journey, the year before was the clockwise trip," he said. He is confident that next year's calendar, "Graveyards of Birmingham", will eclipse his current bestseller, which depicts local road-kills – "dedicated to all the courageous critters who didn't quite make it across the road". This is by far the most popular work since his company, Round-A-Bouts of Great Britain, was launched in 2003. The macabre publication has been eagerly snapped up all over the world. *Birmingham Mail, 12 April 2012.*

Dull ¼
Welcome To
BORING OREGON
Est. 1903

DULL AND BORING

Residents of the tiny village of Dull in Perthshire, Scotland, are seeking to twin officially with the logging town of Boring in Oregon, USA. The link-up was due to be formally proposed in May to the Boring Community Planning Organisation, chaired by Steve Bates. It was the brainchild of Elizabeth Leighton from Grandtully in Highland Perthshire, who passed through Boring while on a cycling holiday and then enlisted the support of her friend Emma Burtles, a Dull resident. "This could have real benefits," said Dull community councillor Marjorie Keddie. "Everyone has been smiling at the prospect of the eye-catching road sign this will require." Boring (named after an early resident, William H Boring) has a population of around 12,000 while Dull consists of a handful of houses on the north side of the Tay valley. *STV-TV, D.Telegraph, BBC News, 24 April 2012.*

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Walking like robots

Unexplained ailment leaves felines with legs and tales rigid

Cats are being struck down by a mystery disease that turns them into 'living robots'. Their legs become rigid, giving them an odd, stiff gait, and their tails stiffen and stick out. The symptoms become progressively worse and they are put down when they start to find it hard to swallow, typically after a year. The condition has baffled vets, as tests for numerous viruses have come back negative. As it doesn't seem to spread between cats and all the sick animals are avid hunters, the most likely source is thought to be a mutant virus carried by mice or voles – an example of "the revenge of the hunted".

Around 50 cases have been spotted in Scotland in the past decade, along with one in Liverpool (although the latter may have caught the disease while living in the Scottish Highlands). The outbreak appears to be centred in a rural area between Inverness and Aberdeen. Vets there have treated around 20 'robotic' cats, including two that have only recently become ill.

Jeannette Andrew, of the Strathbogie Veterinary Centre in Aberdeenshire, said: "They look like robots. They get a bit lost and get stuck in corners and don't know how to reverse and turn round." The condition also affects personality, with most of the sick animals becoming more affectionate. Some, however, become aggressive. Vets have tried painkillers, vitamins, antibiotics and drugs for multiple sclerosis, but none has held the disease at bay.

A similar condition, known as 'staggering disease', has been seen in Sweden and Austria, but the cats there do not develop stiff tails. *D.Mail, 17+19 April; Aberdeen Eve. Express, 8 May 2012.*

NEWSLINE SCOTLAND / DEREK IRONSIDE

NEWSLINE SCOTLAND / DEREK IRONSIDE

TOP: Tinker shows typical symptoms of robotic cat disease.

RIGHT: Tinker's owners Allister and Shona Sim from Kennethmont, Aberdeenshire.

SIDELINES...

GHOSTLY HOAX

Farmer Mityo Aydelnaretsa, 46, convinced the inhabitants of Dimitrovgrad village in Bulgaria that their homes were haunted – so they would leave and he could snap up land on the cheap. Every night he would sneak out to throw stones on roofs and shine a torch through windows. Search parties failed to find a culprit, but a police CCTV camera caught the farmer rustling bushes and wailing. *Sun, 19 April 2012*.

INVISIBLE RODENTS

Bingu wa Muharika, the eccentric and dictatorial president of Malawi who died on 5 April, abandoned the presidential palace in Lilongwe – a 300-room, $100 million pile erected by his predecessor, Hastings Banda – declaring it to be haunted and claiming that invisible rodents were running all over him at night. Exorcists were called in. *D.Telegraph, 11 April 2012*.

ESCAPE IS SEEMPLES

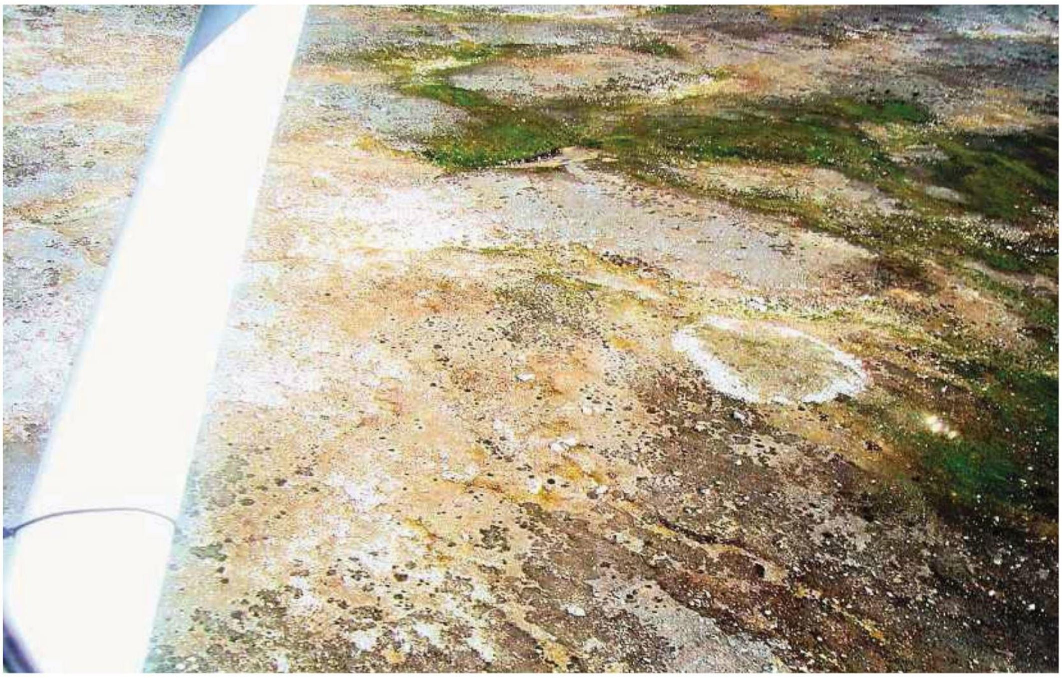
A meerkat nicknamed Houdini keeps escaping from a zoo pen surrounded by an electric fence, and comes back with food. It sneaks out of the enclosure shared with four other meerkats at the Wingz sanctuary in Tywardreath, Cornwall. "We don't know how he does it," said owner Grenville Allen. "He brings back rabbits for the clan to tuck into. Any zoo will tell you they don't jump – but we've seen Houdini do just that." *Sun, 8 April 2012*.

WELFARE CUT

An unemployed Austrian deliberately sliced off his left foot with an electric saw and threw it into an oven ahead of a health check on whether he was fit to work. Hans Url, 56, from Mitterlabill in the province of Styria, lost a lot of blood and, on the verge of death, called an ambulance. The foot was well cooked and could not be reattached. *D.Telegraph, MX News (Sydney), 27 Mar; WRTV (Indianapolis), 28 Mar 2012*.

Natural stone circle

Huge rock pattern seen in isolated Canadian mountains



MICHAEL J CZAJKOWSKI

ABOVE: The rock formation spotted from the air by Chris Czajkowski . **BELOW:** Andrew Okulitch and Michael Czajkowski.

Chris Czajkowski, an author and wilderness guide, operates a backwoods retreat in the Coast Mountains of British Columbia in Canada. On one aerial photograph she took of a plateau high above the tree line in the Chilcotin Range, about 300km (186 miles) northwest of Vancouver, she noticed a 50m (164ft)-wide circle of white stones. Could it be a prehistoric temple or astronomical observatory? After all, ancient aboriginal sites elsewhere in British Columbia have produced smaller stone circles and associated artefacts. On the other hand, ancient astronaut enthusiasts might well interpret it as a landing site for alien spaceships.

The rocks may have been left as a glacial mass melted

The mysterious formation was studied by two geologists, Ms Czajkowski's brother Michael of the UK's Open University and Andrew Okulitch of the Geological Survey of Canada, who published their findings in the *Canadian Journal of Earth Sciences* in February. They dismissed an anthropogenic origin for the circle "since there is no evidence of stacking" of the white stones, some of which weigh several tons. "The harsh climate and absence of sustenance at 2,000 metres [6,500ft] elevation in postglacial times likely discourage occupation or even travel in the region," they said, "and no obvious astronomic or spiritual reason for such a structure can be imagined, even if a supply of unique stones was available in the immediate area."

Instead, they speculated that the rocks became stranded on an isolated glacial mass at the end of the last Ice Age about 10,000 years ago, sliding off piece by piece around the edge of the frozen pillar until it melted away and left the stone circle behind. A disappointment for fans of von Däniken. *(Victoria, BC) Times Colonist, 15 Feb 2012.*

SIDELINES...

ANTHEM BLUNDER

Maria Dmitrienko won a gold medal for Kazakhstan at the Arab Shooting Championships in Kuwait on 22 March. During the awards ceremony, the organisers mistakenly broadcast the spoof national anthem from Sacha Baron Cohen's 2006 movie, *Borat*. Lyrics include "We invented toffee and trouser belt" and "Come grasp the mighty penis of our leader, from junction with testes to tip of its face". Ms Dmitrienko stood throughout poker-faced, smiling as it ended. *(Melbourne) Sunday Age, 25 Mar; D.Mail, 26 Mar 2012*.

HALF-HEARTED HIJACK

Two passengers on an early-morning tram in Slovakia's capital Bratislava threatened the driver with a gun as they demanded he turned the vehicle around. Nobody was hurt and the men escaped before police arrived. *D.Telegraph, 23 Mar 2012*.

AVIAN ALTRUISM?

A crow rescued a baby pigeon from certain death by twice moving it off a busy road in Brockley, south London, after it fell out of its nest. The bird was too young to fly so the crow picked it up in its beak and moved it to the gutter after a narrow miss with a passing car. When it fell on the road again, the crow repeated the rescue, this time leaving it on the pavement before flying away. The whole event was caught on camera by a City trader. *D.Mirror, 1 April 2012*.

MARTIN ROSS

SIDELINES…

SHINING ICONS

Hundreds of pilgrims flocked to the Church of Sveti Dimitrije in Skopje, Macedonia, to see icons that had started to shine without apparent explanation. "It is really a miracle," said Father Dimce Malinov. "The golden colour is very visible." *[AFP] 10 April 2012.*

STOP FLAPPING

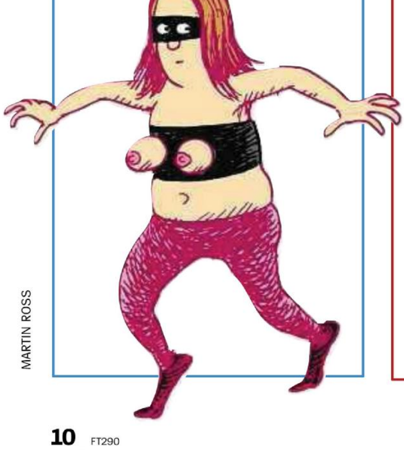
East Sussex Wildlife Rescue and Ambulance Service were called out 27 times to help a swan mistakenly thought to be stuck in ice on Pells Pond in Lewes, East Sussex. Most callers reported it had a leg stuck when it was actually tucked up under its feathers to keep warm. The swan was sitting still in the water to conserve energy. *D.Telegraph, 13 Feb 2012.*

SPHERICAL FARCE

A bomb disposal team was called to a building site by Cowlin Construction Ltd to deal with a 'hand grenade' – which turned out to be a bedknob. The Royal Navy in Plymouth investigated the item, which could also have been the end of a curtain pole. *D.Telegraph, 23 Mar 2012.*

OUTLAW WETNURSE

Rebecca Silva, 24, was arrested in South Dakota after breaking into a house and breastfeeding a baby. The baby's mother found the intruder about 5am, feeding the two-month-old. She called authorities and managed to get the baby back from Silva, who then lay on a bed until the police arrived. *dailymail.co.uk, 10 April 2012.*



MARTIN ROSS

NOT SO COCKSURE

SOME GRAPHIC TALES OF RECENT ASSAULTS ON MALE DIGNITY

FEMALE REVENGE

● On 11 July 2011, Catherine Kieu Becker, 48 (right), of Garden Grove, Orange County, California, laced her husband's dinner with a drug that made him feel sick, so he went to lie down and lost consciousness. She then tied his arms and legs to the bed, cut off his penis with a 10in (25cm) knife as he awoke, threw it in the waste disposal unit and switched it on – after which she called the police. She told officers "he deserved it" before pointing to the room where the victim was found bleeding heavily. The unnamed husband, aged 51 or 60, who had filed for divorce the previous May, was in a serious condition, but was expected to live. His organ was too mangled for reattachment. The argument that sparked the attack was said to be about houseguests. In September 2011, Mrs Becker pleaded not guilty. No sentence had been set at the time of going to press. If convicted of all counts, she faced life in jail without parole. *D.Telegraph, Metro, Irish Independent, 14 July; Sun, 26 Sept 2011.*

Commenting on this case, the columnist Alexander Chancellor, writing in the *Guardian* on 15 July 2011, said: "This is not something that happens often – the last known occasion was in Virginia in 1993 when Lorena Bobbitt did it to her husband, John Wayne Bobbitt" [**FT75:28–33**] – which just goes to show how little attention Mr Chancellor pays to the news. Penis severings are reported every year. Below is a recent selection.

Becker threw her husband's penis in the waste disposal

● A 40-year-old Bangladeshi woman cut off a man's penis during an alleged attempted rape and took it – wrapped in polythene – to a police station as evidence. The mother of three was attacked while she was sleeping in her shanty in Jhalakathi district, 125 miles (200km) south of Dhaka, on 28 May 2011. The suspect, a 40-year-old father of five, was being treated in hospital. The woman said he had been harassing her for six months. *MX News (Sydney), 31 May 2011.*

● Virginia Valdez, 69, was arrested at her house in Palm Springs, California, after allegedly trying to cut off her husband's penis with a pair of scissors. She was held on suspicion of assault with a deadly weapon, spousal abuse and "aggravated mayhem". His husband, 62, was taken to hospital with injuries described as "non life-threatening". *ABC News, Sun, 6 Dec 2011.*

● A 30-year-old Vietnamese woman, identified only by her surname, Pan, cut off about half her husband's penis with scissors at their home in the southern Taiwanese city of Tainan. She then threw the severed member into a river in revenge for his affair with another woman and his physical abuse. After turning herself in, she told police she felt no regret about what she had done to her husband, a 29-year-old unemployed Taiwanese man who used recreational drugs. *[AFP] 17 Oct 2011.*

● Isaias Saturnino, 42, was asleep at home in northeastern Brazil on 24 April 2009 when his girlfriend, Maria da Silva, cut off his penis with a kitchen knife. She had accused him of raping her teenaged daughter since she was seven. Silva was on the run while Saturnino underwent reconstructive surgery. He was expected to stay at least two months in hospital for observation. *[AP] 29 April 2009.*

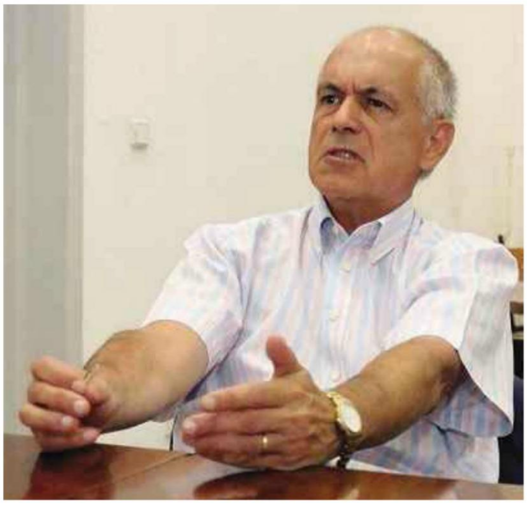
● And in Australia, a man of 35 whose suspicious wife tried to hack off his testicles was recovering in hospital in Alice Springs. *Sun, 8 Nov 2011.*

DIY BOBBITING

● A 30-year-old Spaniard from Salamanca cut off his penis on 30 August 2007 and threw it in a lavatory "so he would stop sinning". He was recovering in the Hospital Clinico Universitario in Salamanca, where his condition was said to be 'stable'. It was unclear if the organ could be reattached. *[EFE with Expatica] 31 Aug 2007.*

● A 25-year-old Egyptian from a prominent family in Sheikh Eissa, in the southern province of Qena, cut off his penis with a hot knife and mutilated his testicles to spite his family after unsuccessfully petitioning his father for two years to marry a girl from a lower class family. He was rushed to hospital but his severed member could not be reattached. *[AP] MX News (Brisbane), 1 June 2009.*

● On 22 April 2007, a 35-year-old Polish man entered Zizzi's pizza restaurant in the Strand, London, and grabbed a knife from the



ABOVE LEFT: Surgeon Naum Ciomu lost his temper when his scalpel slipped, and proceeded to chop up his patient's penis.
ABOVE RIGHT: Maria Topp doesn't remember biting into her boyfriend's scrotum after a 10-hour drinking session in Newcastle.

kitchen before climbing onto a table, dropping his trousers and cutting off his penis in front of diners, many of whom had gathered there after the London marathon. In fact, the 200-seat restaurant was packed. When police arrived at 9pm, they recovered the severed organ from the floor after subduing its crazed owner with CS gas. It was reattached at St Thomas's Hospital, in the first operation of its kind in the UK. A urologist explained that it might have to be reamputated if the complex operation failed. The restaurant was a curiously apt venue, as Zizi is common French slang for willy, todger, dong, prick, etc. *Sun, BBC News, 24 April; Guardian, 25 April 2012.*

● Ion Jiga, 41, was admitted to hospital in Bucharest, Romania, for a routine operation, but Naum Ciomu's scalpel slipped and the stressed-out surgeon, who was having personal problems, hacked off Jiga's penis in a rage and chopped it into tiny pieces. Jiga later won £400,000 in damages. He told the court that his wife had left him and he had endured dozens of attempts to rebuild his genitalia. Ciomu was struck off but – incredibly – had since been allowed to work again because of staff shortages. *Sun, 16 July 2011.*

BITERS

● A mother of four who bit her boyfriend's scrotum, leaving a testicle exposed, was given a suspended 12-month sentence last November. Maria Georgina Topp, 43, from Wrekenton, Gateshead, Tyne & Wear, attacked Martin Douglas at his Newcastle flat on 18 February 2011. The 45-year-old DJ lost two pints of blood and needed 19 stitches. The pair, who had been in a relationship for about five years, had been drinking for 10 hours at the time of the attack, which Topp didn't remember (though we're betting Mr Douglas does). She was ordered to do 150 hours of unpaid work and was served with a five-year restraining order preventing her from contacting Mr Douglas – who had been left with a 4½in (11.4cm) scar on his scrotum. *BBC News, 11 Nov; D.Mirror, 12 Nov; The People, 27 Nov 2011.*

She whipped his trousers down and sank her teeth in

● A Ugandan woman bit off her husband's penis and testicles on 17 March 2002 after an argument got heated. Annet Minduru, 30, took revenge on John Ndekeezi after he slapped her during the row in Kampala. "I was so drunk that she overpowered me," he said. The attack came only two days after a wife killed her husband in central Uganda by cutting off his testicles. She claimed he was unable to provide for her and their two children. *[AP] 20 Mar; Sunday Times, 24 Mar 2002.*

● During a row with her ex-boyfriend in East Lothian on 24 April 2002, an 18-year-girl whipped down his trousers and sank her teeth into his tackle. The 19-year-old fisherman was rushed to hospital with the top of his manhood dangling by a thread. It was successfully reattached. *Sun, 1 May 2002.*

● A woman sank her teeth into the testicles of a man who broke into her property to steal cattle and tried to rape her, leaving doctors no option but to lop one ball off. The incident happened in a remote village in Peru when Hermogenes Meza and 10 men tried to steal Elizabeth Coz's cattle. Coz was not arrested as she acted in self-defence. The men ran away when Coz and her relatives started stoning them. *Adelaide Sunday Mail, 15 May 2005.*

● Katya Kharitovonova, 36, woke after a boozy night with her husband Mikhail, 40, to find him engaged in a sex act with her best friend, Liza Dmitriyeva, 33. She hit her friend with a lamp and then bit off her husband's penis. It was later reattached and Kharitovonova was jailed for two years in Moscow. *Sun, 24 Mar 2009.*

SIDELINES...

NAUTICAL NO-NOS

Historian Debra Chatfield speculates that *RMS Titanic* may have sunk because crew and passengers ignored deep-seated sailor superstitions against having women, priests, red-heads, barbers, dogs and flowers on board. Breaking so many taboos all at once was fatal, she suggested. *(Dublin) Metro Herald, 5 April 2012.*

RARE FOX KILLED

A black fox, the first to be seen in Britain for four years, was photographed on farmland in Hertfordshire on 26 March. Three days later, what was thought to be the same animal was found dead close by, on Old North Road between Royston and Bassingbourn. It had been run over. *D.Mail, 28+30 Mar; Cambridge News, 29 Mar 2012.*

WELL NAMED

A woman accidentally bumped into Fellony Silas, 30, while dancing at a sports bar in Bloomington, Indiana. Silas argued with her before hitting her on the forehead with a glass. Fellony Silas was jailed on felony battery charges. *MX News (Sydney), 17 April 2012.*

EXPENSIVE SLIP-UP

Leicester Council is facing a £70,000 bill after a warden fell and injured himself while putting up health and safety signs. The unnamed man hurt his back, neck, wrists and arms, and the council agreed to settle the case out of court. *D.Telegraph, 9 Mar 2012.*

BEWARE OF FALLING WARNING SIGNS

MARTIN ROSS

SIDELINES...

HOPS INTO TROUBLE

A wild wallaby died after swimming across a stretch of water and hopping onto a dual carriageway, where it was hit by a car. The wallaby had crossed the Swale to the Isle of Sheppey in Kent from the village of Iwade on 16 March before being hit on the A249. *D.Telegraph, 19 Mar 2012*.

EGGLESS CHICK

A hen in Welimada, Sri Lanka, gave birth to a chick without an egg. Instead of passing out of the hen's body and being incubated externally, the egg was incubated in the hen for 21 days and then hatched inside the hen. The chick was fully formed and healthy, but the mother passed away. A post mortem exam concluded that it died of internal wounds. *BBC News, 19 April 2012*.

HOT DOG COMEDY

After being alerted by passers-by in Mansfield, Nottingham, on 26 March, two police officers smashed the window of a Mercedes coupe to save a King Charles Spaniel baking in the sunshine on the back seat – only to find it was a £4.50 stuffed toy. The police had to pay the owner £180 compensation. *Sun, 2 April 2012*.

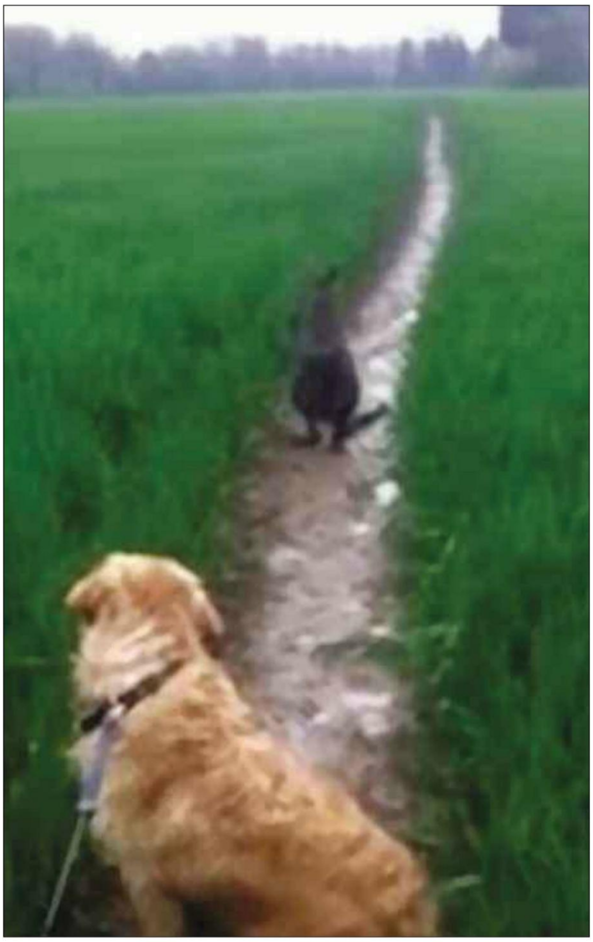
LOFT ALARM

A terrified woman called the Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals after discovering a 5ft (1.5m) 'snake' in the loft of a house in Kingswells, near Aberdeen, that she had just rented. The supposed reptile turned out to be a draught excluder with a red felt tongue. *Metro, <i>, 4 April 2012*.

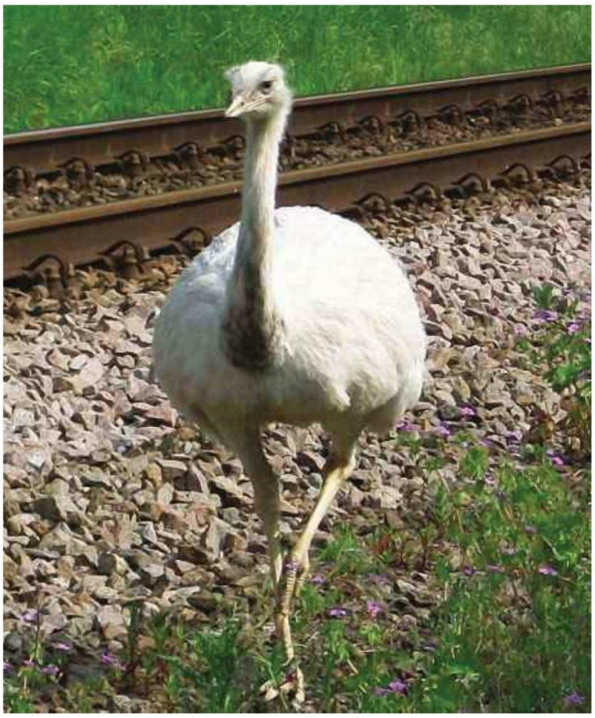
LEDERHOSEN?

Plain clothes police have stepped up patrols at a rendezvous for people meeting for outdoor sex in Weston Woods, near Baldock, Hertfordshire, after residents complained about a man in a "yodelling outfit" being led around on a chain by another man. *D.Telegraph, 19 April 2012*.

ANIMALS GO EXPLORING



ALEX POOLEY



ARCHANT

WALLABY WALKABOUT

Shown left is the moment a dog encountered a wallaby in Pluckley, Kent. The marsupial approached Alex Pooley, 29, who was walking her retriever, Shackleton.

"It was 6.30 in the morning," Ms Pooley told *FT*. "We were out for an early walk, near Pluckley Station, and the dog spotted it first. He gave chase, and when I finally got him back on the lead the wallaby hopped right up to us. I had my phone out to try and catch it on video – otherwise I don't think anyone would have believed me!"

The amazed teacher, who says she has since heard of a couple of other local sightings, put her footage of the incident on YouTube. It's possible the wallaby is one called Wesley, which has been living in the wild since escaping from a farm in 2000. *Metro, D.Mirror, 11 May 2012*.

RHEA HOLDS UP TRAIN

At about 11am on 24 May, a train driver was forced to slam on the brakes after a giant rhea strolled on to the railway tracks. The exotic South American bird appeared on the line near Wickham Market, Suffolk, in the path of the Ipswich to Saxmundham train. It eventually walked off the tracks (below), allowing the train to continue after a short delay.

Pat Andrews spotted the 5ft (1.5m) bird on the tracks. "I was cutting across the railway line to see a friend and as I climbed over the stile I saw it standing there," she said. "A train had just gone past up to Saxmundham, so people on that must have seen it. It ran right up to me. When it came near me I must admit I did climb back up the bank slightly, but I got a fantastic picture because it was so close. I called the police because it's a danger to itself and to the trains." *dailymail.co.uk, 25 May 2012*.

BIRDIE ON GOLF COURSE

Meanwhile, another rhea spent a couple of days (or "weeks", according to the *South Wales Argus*) wandering around the Brynmeadows Hotel Golf Club in Caerphilly, South Wales. Women's golf captain Megan Vaughan complained that the "emu", as it was first thought to be, had tried to eat her golf ball. The RSPCA was called in, and the bird has now been returned to its owner, who lived just a mile or so from the course. *BBC News, South Wales Argus, 21 May; Sun, 22 May 2011*.

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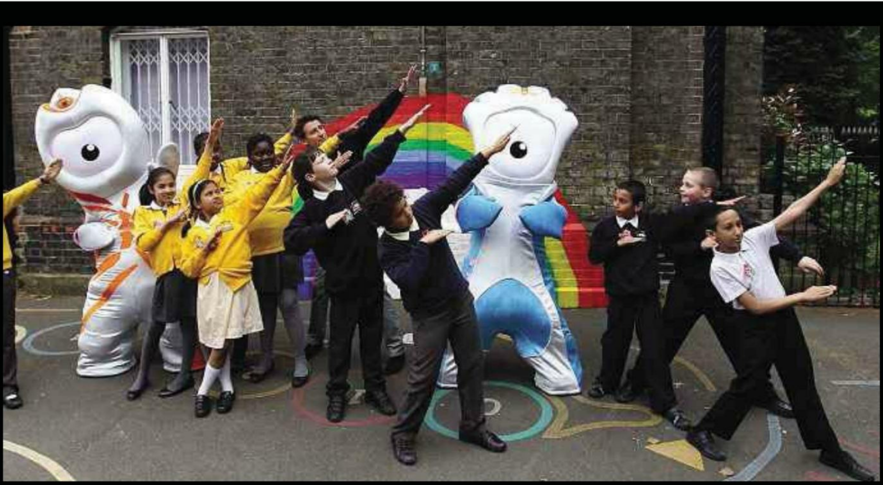
2012 WATCH OLYMPIC SPECIAL

DAVID SUTTON PONDERS THE CONSPIRACY THEORIES THAT HAVE DOGGED THE LONDON 2012 OLYMPIC GAMES


GETTY IMAGES / JULIAN FINNEY

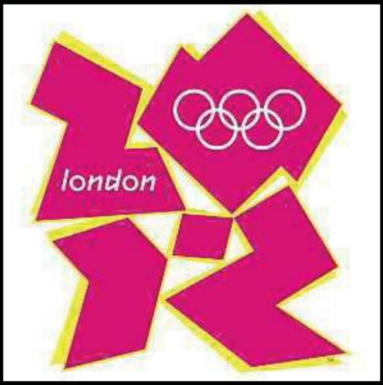
LEFT: Wenlock and Mandeville; are these Olympic mascots forcing schoolchidren to give Nazi salutes? **BELOW:** The infamous London 2012 logo; rearranged, it is said to spell "ZION". **FACING PAGE, TOP:** Does this card from the Illuminati card game predict a nuclear attack on the London Olympics? **FACING PAGE, BOTTOM:** Conspiracy theorist Rik Clay.

END GAMES

As we count down the days to the End, there's been no shortage of other doom-laden scenarios to exercise those of a conspiratorial and/or apocalyptic bent, and the over-hyped, over-budget "festival of running up and down" [1] that is the London 2012 Olympic Games has provided fodder aplenty for the sort of people who get their news from Above Top Secret and davidicke.com.

Dark mutterings have been heard across the 'Olympic Boroughs', and far beyond, about Zionist conspiracies, an Illuminati coup, terrorist atrocities, false-flag operations and alien landings in the already monster-infested (see pp32–37) Olympic Park.

It started as far back as 2007 with the unveiling of the shocking pink – and shockingly crap, as many noted – official logo for the London Games. It looked, some said, like a "broken swastika" created by a failed graffiti artist, or Lisa Simpson giving a blowjob. The jiggling animated version quickly had an epilepsy charity worrying that a repeat of the Pokemon panic (see **FT149:36–40**) was on the cards when the graphic was said to cause seizures. [2] But where most people saw merely evidence of the government and sporting establishment's obsession with lucrative branding and desire to get down with the kids, others perceived something far more sinister. Before long, the message boards at conspiracy sites were abuzz: it was clear that the jagged elements of the logo, when rearranged in a line, spelt out "Zion". There was even a dot on the 'i'.



GETTY IMAGES / AFP

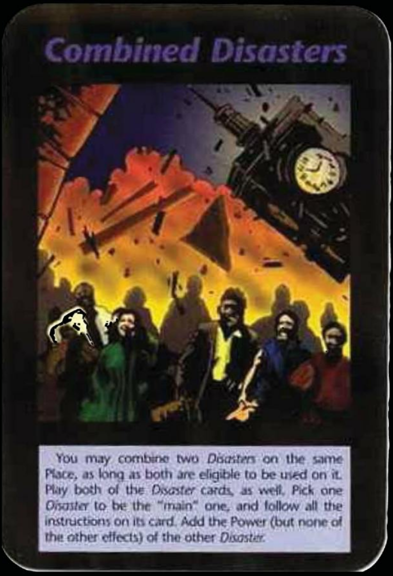
Weirder still, it was noted that the 2008 Beijing Olympics logo had stolen a march on the London games and had already done the same thing. (In fairness, it should be said that this would be clear only to a paranoid schizophrenic who had taken said stylised figure of a sportsperson and done major violence to it with a pair of scissors.)

By 2011, the currency of this notion was sufficiently widespread that Iran was threatening to boycott the Games unless the offending logo was replaced. In the spirit of a weary Sigmund Freud, an IOC spokesman responded by saying that "The London 2012 logo represents the figure 2012, nothing else."

But what did it mean? More than just the old, anti-Semitic agenda, it turns out. In fact, in a world where nothing is as it seems and 'symbology' runs riot, "Zion" pointed to nothing less than the mother of all conspiracies. The next clue came when the official mascots for the games were unveiled in 2010 to initial bafflement followed by near-universal derision. Wenlock and Mandeville (named for the Shropshire town of Much Wenlock, whose own Olympian Games began in 1850, and Stoke Mandeville Hospital, where a forerunner of today's Paralympics were held) were even stranger-looking than the much-mocked logo: a pair of one-eyed alien creatures ("like something you would expect to find chasing Doctor Who" was one of the kinder verdicts) made, so the official backstory went, out of droplets of molten steel used in building the Olympic stadium.

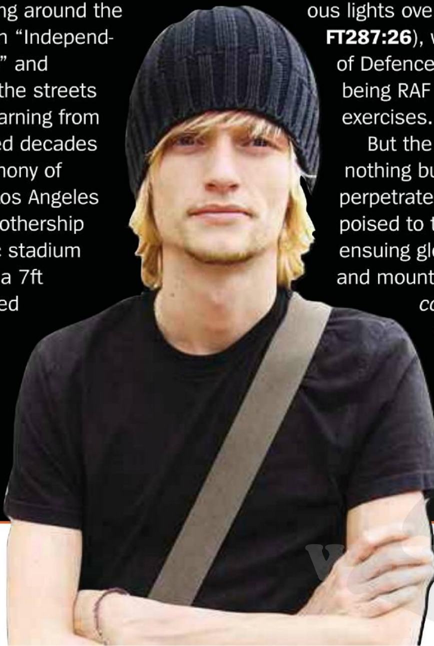
Yeah, right, said the conspiracy theorists. The monoculor extraterrestrials were a clear sign, for those in the know, that none other than the Illuminati were at work. As we've seen before (**FT239:32–38**, **FT258:32–39**), these hidden masters of the world like to flaunt their plans through the blatant use of certain esoteric symbols, so there was nothing surprising in the bearers of the All-Seeing Eye hiding in plain sight as cute and cuddly childrens' characters. One perceptive 2012-watcher spotted further typical clues in a TV news report: "Notice… the freemasonic checkerboard pattern the children walk over with the mascots, and the Nazi style salute the children are made to do." [3]

A chap called Ian R Crane ("I don't care if people call me a nutter, I hope that by spreading the word about what's going to happen I can help save thousands of lives") [4] seems to have been the first to make the connection: Zion meant the New Jerusalem to be built by the Illuminati as the hub of their New World Order. Ian is a conspiracy all-rounder in the David Icke mould and founder of the Alternative View conferences (see **FT266:38–39**). He has something to say about nearly everything,



Combined Disasters

You may combine two *Disasters* on the same Place, as long as both are eligible to be used on it. Play both of the *Disaster* cards, as well. Pick one *Disaster* to be the "main" one, and follow all the instructions on its card. Add the Power (but none of the other effects) of the other *Disaster*.



and his vast knowledge of 'exopolitics' allows him to "connect the apparently random pieces of a complex multi-dimensional puzzle", as one of his DVD blurbs has it.

Others predicted a 'false flag' terrorist outrage at the London games; most likely, as the bizarre 'Blackjack' incident (see **FT252:20–21**) suggested – whether that was a *Daily Telegraph* spoof, an MI5 psy-op or an Illuminati tease – a nuclear attack.

'Proof' was discovered in both an episode of *The Simpsons* and the 1995 Steve Jackson Games *Illuminati: New World Order* collectible card game. Cards seemingly predicting the events of 9/11 – the Twin Towers blowing up and the Pentagon in flames – had already been found; now the 'Combined Disasters' card was played. It showed a clocktower that looked (a bit) like the one housing Big Ben collapsing on five terrified people whose shirts "matched exactly" the colours of the five Olympic rings (well, they do match if you accept that black is the same colour as white).[5]

The person who really put 'Zion 2012' on the conspiracy map, though, was a young musician and budding conspiracy theorist from Yorkshire called Rik Clay. Rik started putting his own detailed take on London 2012 online, via his Cosmic Mind blog, teasing out every last clue to its labyrinthine nature. The large chunk of east London earmarked for the Olympic site wasn't, for instance, just a fortuitously untouched bit of wasteland. Using Google Earth to search the names of streets in the area revealed its part in the grand plan: Temple Mill Lane, Great Eastern Road, Carpenter's Lane, Angel Lane… not to mention the 'leys' hidden in Leyton and Leytonstone themselves, or the the crucial presence of the 'A(20)12': "The roads which encompass the site contain biblical and Masonic references, lying dormant for years, as if to become part of some majestic ritual."

A promotional video[6] showing how the site would be transformed set further alarm bells ringing, showing "UFOs flying around the London 'All Seeing Eye'", an "Independence Day style mothership" and "Robotic street walkers in the streets of London". There was a warning from history here, a seed planted decades earlier at the closing ceremony of the 1984 (note the date) Los Angeles Olympics, when another mothership had flown over the Olympic stadium before landing to disgorge a 7ft (2.1m)-tall alien which waved to the crowd with its six-fingered hands. You can't say we weren't warned.[7]

Clay went on to create an ever more elaborate and terrifyingly baroque edifice constructed of interlinked strands of conspiratorial thinking, dragging in Stonehenge, pyramid lore, 'ley lines', Freemasonry, numerology, Sir Christopher Wren, George Orwell, Prince William and the royal bloodline, the Number of the Beast, 9/11, the Tibetan flag, the terrorist attack at the 1972 Munich Olympics, the Mayan long count calendar and *Coronation Street*'s Deirdre Barlow (OK, I made that last one up) to further his 'argument'. It's complicated, as they say – a bit like one of Ian Crane's complex multi-dimensional puzzles, one imagines – but this new kind of post-modern conspiracy theory is all about "joining the dots".

The overall upshot of this bit of paranoid bricolage, though, is clear enough. An alien invasion will take place at the London 2012 games, with massed saucers terrifying the assembled crowds and sparking worldwide panic as the media beam the events around the globe. Some inhabitants of Gravesend, Kent, have already reported mysterious lights over the Thames (see **FT287:26**), which the Ministry of Defence has 'explained' as being RAF Typhoons on training exercises.

But the 'invasion' will be nothing but a massive hoax perpetrated by the Illuminati, poised to take advantage of the ensuing global discombobulation and mount their long-planned *coup d'état*. The Olympic coup will simply be the logical conclusion of a conspiracy many millennia in the making but accelerating in recent years – as seen in such examples of "self-imposed chaos" as the 9/11 false-flag operation and subsequent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and the deliberately-created global recession. Datewise, it would all seem to dovetail nicely with other 2012 lore, offering a distinctively political twist on the End of the World as We Know It; as one blogger writes: "The powers that be… have created a system of governing initiatives carefully designed to guarantee your unwilling participation. Over the next couple of years, you will either willingly become dependent on the progressive New World Order, or you will be taxed into submission. By the time we reach the date of no return on December 21 2012, we will be insisting that the world governments intervene and bring order to the chaos that they themselves so skilfully crafted."[8]

Rik Clay's Cosmic Mind blog went offline in June 2008, resulting in a welter of Internet speculation that "they" had somehow silenced him. "I have had a bad feeling about Rik right from the beginning," wrote one poster on the David Icke forums. "Something is not right here… can anyone do remote viewing… maybe we could zero in to see if he is still alive?"

In fact, Rik Clay had undergone some sort of breakdown, and on 28 August 2008, aged 26, he took his own life. Predictably, many believed he had been taken out by the same conspiratorial forces he'd been trying to expose, possibly by EMF weapons that first drove him mad and then forced him to commit suicide. His writings can be found, resurrected, on many conspiracy forums and blogs.[9]

Whatever goes down, or doesn't, at the London Olympics, there's little doubt that the forces which created the 'conspiracy' – whether Reptilians, Illuminati and Bilderbergers, or anomie, alienation and the Internet – will outlive both Rik Clay and the 2012 games. Even if only until 21 December…

NOTES

[1] As it was once described by novelist Will Self, who also said: "I think the Olympics suck dogshit through a straw".

[2] bbc.in/eDVjcH (BBC).

[3] http://bit.ly/KOs2Z1 (leaksource.wordpress.com).

[4] http://bit.ly/n4MIdn (thesun.co.uk). See also www.ianrcrane.com/

[5] http://bit.ly/lddmmi (YouTube).

[6] http://bit.ly/9X9ifr (YouTube).

[7] http://bit.ly/jvsZAV (YouTube).

[8] http://bit.ly/atX89x (december212012.com/). The page also carries an ad for "37 things you should start hoarding NOW".

[9] For instance: http://bit.ly/LkVQNL (pigs-in-the-parlor.blogspot.co.uk).

MATT PATTINSON

FLIGHTS OF FANCY

The astronomical costs have always been controversial but, wonders **DAVID HAMBLING**, can private money and SF dreams take space travel where no agency has gone before?

On 22 May, an unmanned cargo spacecraft blasted off from Cape Canaveral; three days later it docked with the International Space Station. It might look like a routine mission, but the Dragon resupply operation was driven by a force different from that of previous launches, a force that could take mankind into orbit, to the asteroids, and beyond the furthest planets.

In the past, NASA paid contractors to build rockets. The contract was on a cost-plus basis, so NASA paid construction costs and added profit for the company. The space shuttle, made by a consortium of Boeing, Lockheed and Alliant Techsystems, should have provided cheap and easy flights to orbit, but ended up being about twice as expensive as the competition at $1.5 billion per launch, or $60k for each kilogram put into orbit. This was about 40 times as much as originally planned. The companies involved always made money, but the US government was less happy.

With the retirement of the space shuttle, NASA has started a Commercial Resupply Services programme. Under this scheme NASA does not buy a spacecraft, but a service. NASA is paying Space Exploration technologies Corporation (SpaceX) to carry 12 loads to the ISS for $1.6 billion. SpaceX have to provide the spacecraft themselves, and their only way to make a profit is to spend less than the amount NASA are paying.

When it was founded in 1958, NASA was a dynamic, forward-looking organisation. Now it looks more bureaucratic and conservative, and in need of entrepreneurial drive, which SpaceX has provided. The company's policy is to eliminate layers of management and work without subcontractors to control costs and quality, and it has developed the Falcon rocket and the Dragon spacecraft it drives rapidly and efficiently.[1] In future, SpaceX aims to field a whole range of launch vehicles to carry satellites, space probes and astronauts into space.

SPACEX

Looking even higher, Planetary Resources Inc. was formed on 24 April to mine asteroids.[2] Asteroid-mining has been a staple of science fiction for decades, but this is the first serious attempt to exploit asteroids for commercial gain. Many previous studies have looked at the asteroids as a stepping stone, a place where water, oxygen, fuel and building materials could be gathered for deep space missions. But asteroids contain all sorts of minerals and precious metals, including gold and platinum as well as elements vital for industry like indium and gallium. Planetary Resources believe that mineral-rich asteroids could be brought back to Earth economically, as "the low-hanging fruit of the Solar System".

A 2012 study by the Keck Institute for Space Studies (KISS) at the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena looks at the practicality of locating an asteroid, then dragging it back to Earth orbit.[3] They estimate that an asteroid 7m (23ft) across and weighing about 500 tons could be retrieved for a bargain $2.6 billion. The study suggests this could be done by around 2025. By comparison, all the Apollo programmes retrieved less than 300kg (660lb) of Moon rock. In this study, the asteroid is assumed to consist largely of stony material and water, with 100 tons of metals, mainly nickel and iron. These may not seem very valuable, but for future space projects it will be a lot cheaper to start with raw materials in space than boosting them up from Earth.

One engineer wants to build a full-scale replica of *Star Trek*'s *USS Enterprise*

Even further ahead, one engineer wants to build a full-scale version of the *USS Enterprise* from *Star Trek*[4] using existing technology. While lacking faster-than-light warp drive, its ion engines could take it to Mars in three months. He estimates that the spacecraft, half a mile (800m) long and powered by a nuclear reactor, would come in at around a trillion dollars (making it arguably a better investment than baling out Greece). Once built, you could bring back as many solid-gold asteroids as you like, or carry out other missions to the furthest reaches of the Solar System.

You might think the new thirst for space is about money and the pursuit of profit. A closer look suggests other motives. SpaceX's CEO and Chief Designer is Elon Musk; he made his fortune with PayPal, but his heart lies elsewhere. His first software, written when he was 12, was a space war game called Blastar. After PayPal, Musk's new enterprises have been SpaceX, electric car company Tesla Motors, and a solar power company. Planetary Resources Inc. is backed by a number of billionaires including science fiction film director James Cameron and Google founder Larry Page. Another backer is Charles Simonyi of Microsoft, who has twice been into space on Russian Soyuz craft.

In its early days, the Internet attracted geeky types who loved computers and science fiction, some of whom are now extremely rich as a result. The generation that grew up on Asimov and *Star Trek* are putting their wealth into extravagant projects to bring science fiction into reality.

Governments dream less of space travel these days; a manned NASA mission to Mars recedes as funding dries up, and the Chinese lunar programme has not yet been approved. But ventures like SpaceX and Planetary Resources show that some people are still dreaming – and it is these dreams that are driving the new space programme.

Hard science fiction, the sort with spaceships, has been in decline for some time. The Fantasy & SF section of bookshops is filled with multivolume heroic sagas and endless vampires. Where the next generation of dreamers will aim is anyone's guess.

NOTES

1 http://bit.ly/97hIDc (spacex.com).

2 http://bit.ly/HS3wkA (planetaryresources.com).

3 http://bit.ly/JPjKeT (nss.org).

4 http://bit.ly/JOqaMl (buildtheenterprise.org).

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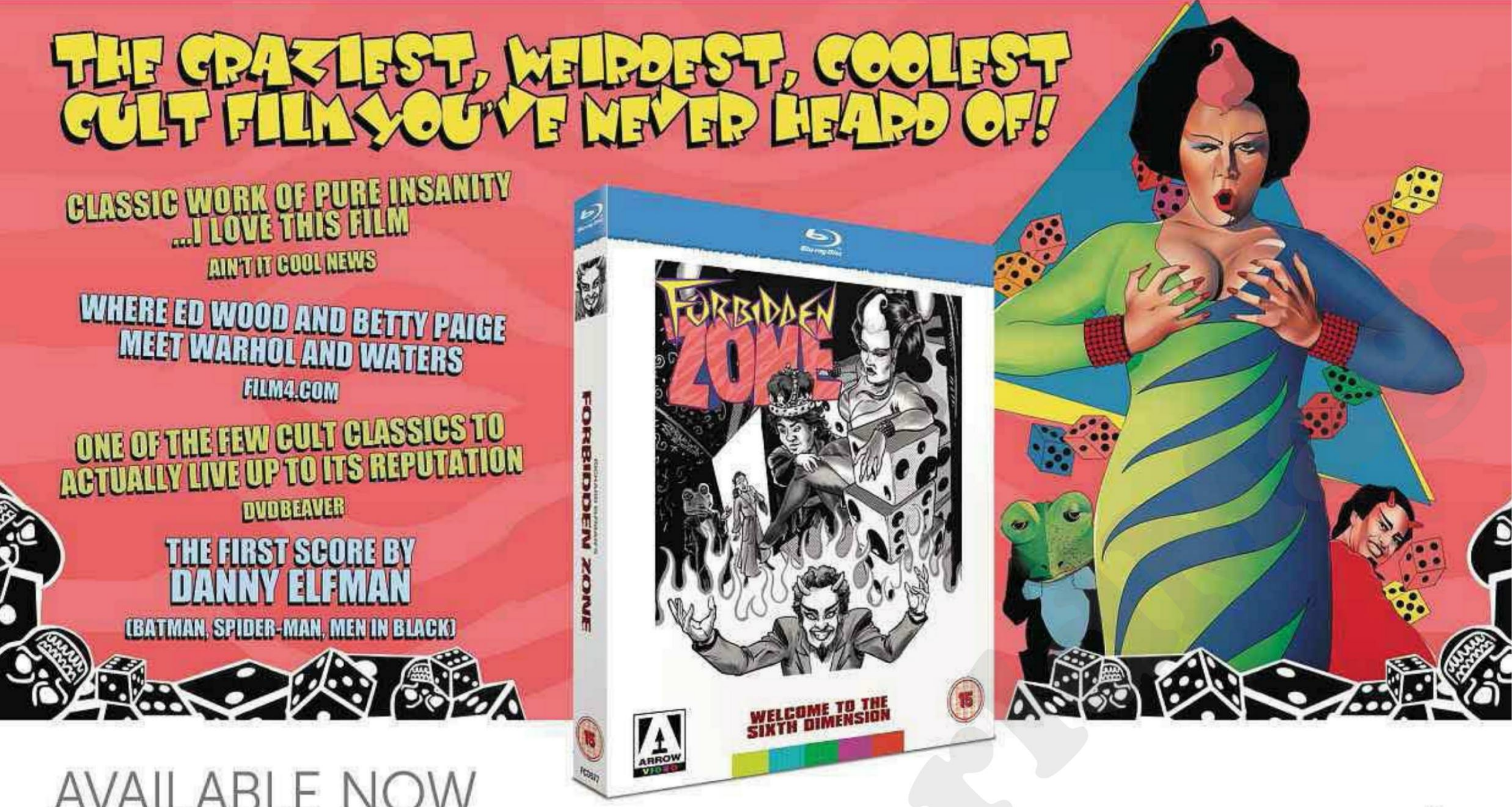
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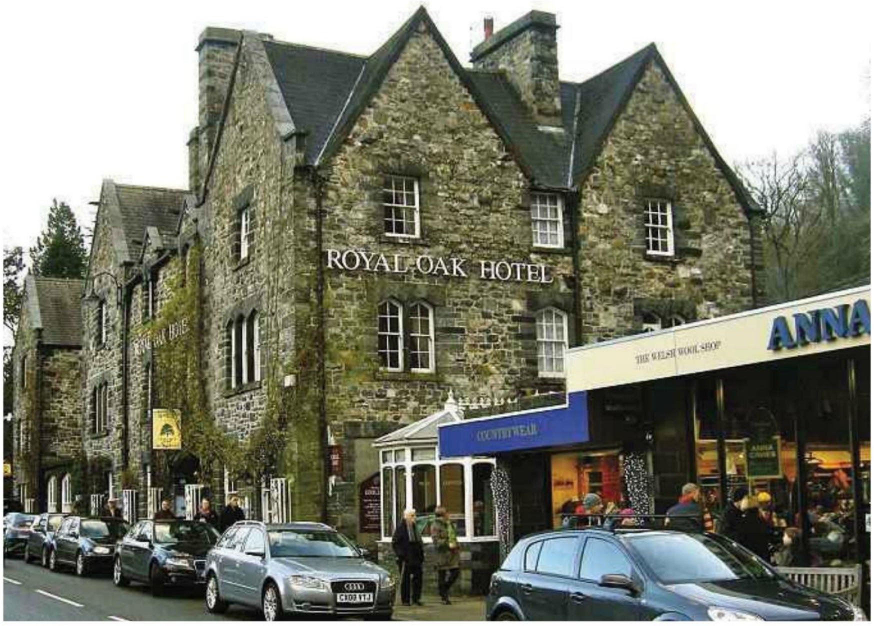
MATT PATTINSON

GHOSTWATCH

ALAN MURDIE reports on separate cases of hauntings “doubling up”.



JOZARTDESIGNS.BLOGSPOT.CO.UK

LEFT: The Royal Oak Hotel in Betws-y-Coed, Wales, with the Anna Davies store visible to the right.

BELOW: Cumberland College, University of Otago, where a dark figure has been spooking students.

GHOSTLY COUPLINGS

Claims from many thousands of miles apart of ghostly ladies haunting pairs of buildings have been stirring up interest and alarm this spring.

In Wales, two adjoining buildings in the Conwy Valley have been reported as being haunted, with phenomena being attributed to female presences variously described as a cloaked lady and a phantom nun, and another apparition described as a shadow. The two buildings affected are the Anna Davies country clothing store and the neighbouring Royal Oak Hotel, in Betws-y-Coed.

One evening just before Christmas 2011, Pete Ward, who runs the Anna Davies store on Holyhead Road with his wife Sara, had a shoe thrown at him on the first floor, launched from a display stand. “It was about 8.30pm,” he said. “I was working late by myself and came upstairs to the first floor. I got to the top step and saw a shoe come towards me from the stand. It landed right in front of me.” He picked up the shoe and tried to communicate with the ghost saying: “There is no need for that”. He added: “I’ve always felt something up here; I’ve often felt something behind me by the till.”

It seems to be a recurrence of poltergeist phenomena that has dogged the shop since the 1960s. Mr Ward’s mother-in-law Anna Evans, who first opened the original Anna Davies store in 1956, experienced incidents while living above the oldest part of the shop in the 1960s, including typical place-centred poltergeist activity such as doors slamming by themselves, objects moving and items going missing.

Ms Evans, who is now retired, explained: “One night I was sitting watching TV and the door slammed by itself. We had a really thick carpet and all the windows were closed. I didn’t know what had caused it at the time.”

> “I saw a shoe coming towards me from the stand. It landed right in front of me.”

She also suffered a boot being thrown at her in the shop about 10 years ago.

Other staff members complain of hearing footsteps and what they described as a crinoline dress against the floor behind them, only to find no one visible when they turn around. Bridget Ferrell, who has worked as an assistant in the shop for the last four years, reports the sensation of a presence and a cold feeling even in summer. Stories also circulate about the sighting of a woman wearing a cape in the stock room of the shop during the 1980s.

Near to the shop is the Royal Oak Hotel, where employees also report strange incidents. Whispering voices seeming to ask “where?” or “why?” have been heard in corridors and a shadowy form seen in the bar.

Lesley Barry, 45, who has worked at the Victorian hotel for the past eight years, says a dark shadow is often seen walking between the toilets and the grill bar. “We often see somebody walking past in the grill bar, but when you turn around there is nobody there,” she said. “Just the other night one of our barmen saw it. He went white and was nearly physically sick.”

Strange smells and cold spots have also been experienced and the television in Room 207 is reported to switch itself on and off. There are also claims of the ghostly figure of a nun outside Room 208. According to secretary and administration worker Barbara Lynch: “A medium came here and saw a nun praying [and] sitting on a chair outside Room 208. I do believe in spirits, but I’m not scared.”

Seeking more information, I contacted the Rev. Towyn J Jones of Carmarthen, a Welsh ghost authority, to see if he had records of either haunting. The stories about both sites came as a surprise to him, but there is a country house in the area known as ‘The Grange’, which is reputedly haunted. Regarding the claim of a ghostly nun at the Royal Oak Hotel, he stated: “I know the Royal Oak at Betws-y-Coed, having dined there on many occasions – and an excellent hostelry it is, but I had no idea it was said to be haunted. Though surely not by a nun! Any nun would have had to stray dismally off course to reach Betws-y-Coed as there is no nunnery within many, many miles”. Given this, could it be that the woman perceived as a nun is in fact connected with the ghostly woman in a cloak reported at the neighbouring Anna Davies Store? *North Wales Weekly News, 22 Mar; Rev. Towyn J Jones pers. comm., 24 Mar 2012*.

GETTY IMAGES / PHIL WALTER

Meanwhile in New Zealand, the sighting of a mysterious dark figure at a college has spread fear and alarm amongst women students. The apparition was sighted at Cumberland College, part of Otago University at Dunedin, on the night of Saturday, 5 May 2012, and the alarmed witnesses were two health science students. Coming back to the college, they were walking down a hallway when both noticed a weird smell and a chill in the air.

According to college resident Mareck Church: “One of the girls saw a black figure beside the fire hydrant, turned to the other girl to point it out, and as they both turned round, they felt a cold whoosh of air pass them." Described as "very shaken" by their experience, the pair went at once to the deputy head of Cumberland College, Rosemary Tarbotton. That might have been the end of the matter, but fear spread amongst women residents when a third student also reported seeing a dark figure at the end of her bed and other "strange happenings" – apparently the flicking on and off of lights – were reported.

In the following week, female students took to sleeping with their lights left on, and some were sharing rooms for fear of a visitation by the ghost. Student Abby Hope who lives at Cumberland College stated: "All the girls were freaking out about it, it was a bit intense. Some girls had their lights flicking on and off".

However, not all students were disturbed by the sightings, with some male students at the 300-strong college treating the apparition as a joke and reportedly playing pranks, including "going around the corridors with pillowcases on their heads".

Fortunately, nerves were calmed following a blessing ceremony at the hall of residence conducted on 10 May by the Rev. Hughes, the college chaplain. He confirmed that he had been required to perform two similar ceremonies at Cumberland College in the last decade. He was backed up by a *kaumatua*, a respected Maori elder.

The reports have caused a big stir in the New Zealand media and have been featured on television. In spite of witnesses describing the college apparition only as a "dark figure" of indeterminate sex, the manifestations were swiftly connected with an existing local tradition of a "Grey Lady" prowling the nearby former Queen Mary Maternity Hospital. The Grey Lady is claimed to be a psychiatric patient who gave birth at the hospital but had her baby taken from her on account of her unfitness as a mother. After her death, she supposedly returned to haunt a nurse responsible for the separation who was staying at Cumberland College in the days it was a nursing home, or alternatively came back to look for her baby, the latter version being endorsed by Andrew Smith, operator of the local 'Hairaiser' ghost tours in Dunedin.

Similar incidents of haunted colleges and hostels with female residents are known from British ghost history. Certainly, many British colleges provide examples of periodic ghost sightings and accompanying panics such as reports of semi-formed vague apparitions reported at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, in 1841 and 1967.

Interestingly, as in this New Zealand case, the witnesses separated by over 100 years at Sidney Sussex reported weird smells when the phenomena occurred. (See Robert Halliday and Alan Murdie: *Cambridge Ghosts*, 2010). Psychical researcher Harry Price (1881–1948) linked some poltergeists and hauntings with concentrations of young females (what he termed "girl material" in his *Poltergeist Over England*, 1945) and might have found comparisons with hauntings of a women's Land Army hostel at Gill House in Cumberland in 1946 that featured strange smells and apparitions. Veteran ghost hunter Peter Underwood details the Gill House case and hints at similar examples at unnamed locations around England in his autobiography *No Common Task* (1983).

SOURCES: http://bit.ly/L1nRGp (3news.co.nz). "Panic After Ghost Sighting by Otago Students", *New Zealand Herald, 22 May 2012*.

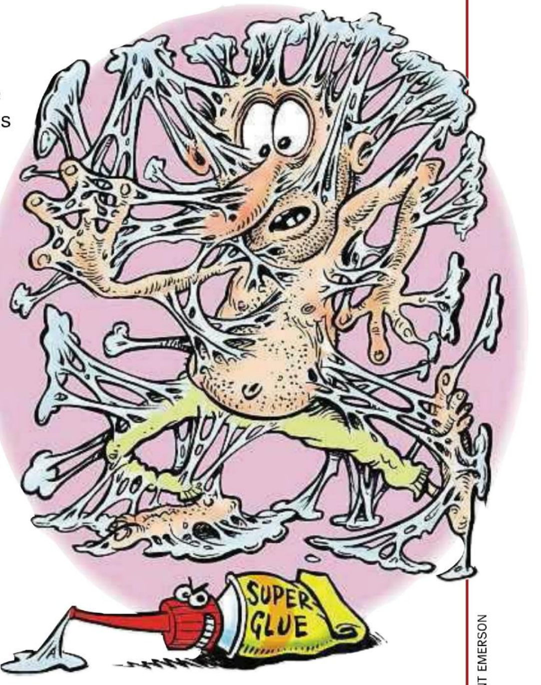
Mythconceptions

by Mat Coward

156. SUPERGLUE

The myth

Superglue was originally developed for medical use as an alternative to sutures – either in Britain's National Health Service in the 1950s, or by the US Army during World War II or the Vietnam war.



HUNT EMERSON

The "truth"

Types of superglue are indeed employed in human and veterinary medicine – but that was not their original use. The glues are made of cyanoacrylate, which was first discovered in 1942 by scientists at the Kodak laboratories who were trying to create transparent plastics for use in gunsights. Obviously, cyanoacrylate was no good because it stuck everything to everything else – so it was rejected. In 1951, cyanoacrylate was rediscovered at Kodak during a search for heat-resistant polymers for aeroplane canopies. This time, the unique properties of the glue – particularly its ability to permanently bond almost any two objects without needing heat or pressure – were recognised, and the company introduced the first superglue to the market in 1958. At first principally an industrial product, the glue was popularised as a household item by still famous publicity stunts, such as using a single drop to lift a TV host off his feet.

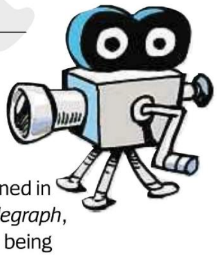
Sources

http://bit.ly/dlyf90 (supergluecorp.com); http://bbc.in/nz6oWE (BBC); http://bit.ly/gXQoj4 (MIT).

Disclaimer

The history of superglue in the 1950s is a tangled one, with different sources offering various candidates for the re-discoverer and/or developer of the product. If you have a clear timeline, and you can make it stick, please write in.

Update



Long ago (**FT184:30**), Mythchaser asked whether it was true that a gang once got away with a bank job by convincing the police they were recording a *Candid Camera* stunt. A possible origin of that story is mentioned in an obituary of *Candid* presenter Jonathan Routh (*D.Telegraph*, 6 June 2008), which recalls a "furtive" filming session being broken up by police: unknowingly, Routh's team had set up near a bank, and a suspicious onlooker had dialled 999.

FOR MORE MYTHCONCEPTIONS, GO TO:
www.forteantimes.com/strangedays/mythbusters

WorldMags

VIETNAMESE FIRE-STARTER

A RECENT CLAIM OF PYROKINESIS, PLUS A ROUND-UP OF EARLIER CASES

ABOVE: An electric fan and mattress said to have been burnt by an 11-year-old girl in Vietnam. **BELOW:** An electrical socket showing scorch marks after short-circuiting.

The news website Vietnamnet has reported the curious story of an unnamed 11-year-old girl in the Tan Binh district of Ho Chi Minh City who apparently causes unexplained fires. The phenomenon was first noticed sometime in April when her family's electrical appliances repeatedly short-circuited and electrical sockets burnt when she approached them. The same happened in other houses she visited, and in a hotel room where her family stayed during their holiday on Vung Tau beach. The corner of the family's lavatory seat was burnt after she had sat on it, and sometimes her clothes burst into flames. On 12 May, the third floor of the family house was gutted by fire. Her family now guards her around the clock to prevent any possible incident. Buckets of water and a wet towel are placed next to her bed in case of emergency.

The family took the girl to Hong Bang International University for treatment by Du Quang Chau. After several tests, the scientist said he noticed "variations from the norm in her cerebral hemisphere". The girl was medically examined at Cho Ray Hospital and the Children No. 2 Hospital, but doctors found nothing abnormal. We are told that the girl once had an unspecified "serious accident" at the age of three. A "strange line" was observed on the right side of her right cerebral hemisphere. "That phenomenon only happens for priests, philosophers or painters," was a gnomic utterance by Dr Nguyen Manh Hung, director of the aforementioned university, who added: "She burned objects near and far from her. There is no limit of distance between the girl and burnt objects. It is very odd! This is a very strange case in Vietnam and the world."

Dr Hung said there was a red mark on the girl's forehead, which disappeared when she put on a black quartz bracelet and reappeared when she took it off; but when she wore the bracelet, she felt uncomfortable and experienced an electric current running through her body. A group of scientists from various fields, led by Dr Hung, collected soil, water, and objects from the girl's home for analysis. *FT* awaits further news. *vietnamnet, 16 May 2012.*

- Over the years, *Fortean Times* has covered several cases of fire-prone people – most famously the Scottish nanny Carole Compton, accused of setting fires in Italy in 1982, allegedly by paranormal powers, who was tried and acquitted the following year (see "Tales From the Vault", p80). At the same time as the Compton trial, a 10-year-old Italian boy called Benedetto Supino was setting objects on fire merely by gazing at them. Everywhere he went, furniture, fittings and objects smouldered. As in the Vietnamese case, he also caused electrical malfunctions and short circuits [**FT42:21**]. Then there was Mrs Barbara Booley who was nearby when seven mysterious fires burst out in 1971–75. "Fires seem to follow me around," she said, "But I swear on any child's head that I didn't start them." [**FT16:4**].

In February 1983, Nadine Calojine, 12, appeared to be causing mysterious blazes in St Pierre on the Indian Ocean island of Réunion. A neighbour's flat was gutted by fire, a mattress in her family's flat was destroyed along with linen in a cupboard, and her clothes caught fire repeatedly [**FT42:49**].

Between December 1986 and April 1987, over 100 fires occurred in the vicinity of Sascha K, a 13-year-old Ukrainian boy. Clothes, furniture, carpets and electrical equipment burst into flames in his presence. He also made objects fly about and lightbulbs explode. One witness said a shoe flew off his foot and out of a window when the boy walked into a room. The case was reported in the sombre pages of *Izvestia*, at the time an official organ of the Soviet Union [**FT49:8**].

In 1990, Tong Tangjiang, a four-year-old boy from Hunan province in China, was the focus of several unexplained fires. His underpants caught fire and he was rushed to hospital, where he spontaneously ignited four times in two hours. His right hand, armpits and private parts were burnt [**FT55:25**].

In 1996, two girls – Jean Jean (10) and Kean Kean (nine) – caused 40 "bizarre fires" in their home in Malaysia. "Objects just burst into flames when my daughters look at them," said sales executive Lee Soon Siong, 44. Mattresses, pillows, newspapers and even a wet towel were destroyed when they were left alone, so their parents took to following them around the house. Doors opened on their own and the main power switch turned itself off 20 to 30 times a day [**FT94:8**].

A^Z ALIEN ZOO

KARL SHUKER presents his regular round-up from the cryptozoological garden, including a previously unreported thylacine sighting, a winged cat, plus tales of black tigers

IN A TIZZY OVER A TASSIE

Colonel Garry Bailey is celebrated in cryptozoological circles as an author of well-received publications on the subject of the thylacine or Tasmanian wolf *Thylacinus cynocephalus* (Tassie, for short) – an officially extinct marsupial species that he has been seeking since 1967. What was not known until very recently, however, was that in 1995 he actually saw one – something he kept secret to safeguard the animal and its location.

His very close encounter occurred during an expedition to southwestern Tasmania's rugged bush country. He had been camping in Weld Valley when a Tassie appeared, standing no more than 15ft (4.5m) away from him as he watched it, trembling with shock and delight. After observing him for several seconds, it backed off, then stopped, turned, and looked at him for a second time before vanishing into nearby scrub. Bearing in mind that the last confirmed Tassie specimen died in 1936 and that the entire species was officially declared extinct in 1986, for such a sighting to be made by a recognised expert on this largest of modern-day carnivorous marsupials is something that clearly cannot be discounted by sceptics as readily as so many other unconfirmed Tassie reports. If only he hadn't left his camera in his pack! Then again, it wouldn't be a classic cryptozoological encounter if he hadn't done so, now would it? *(Melbourne) Herald Sun, 26 April 2012*.

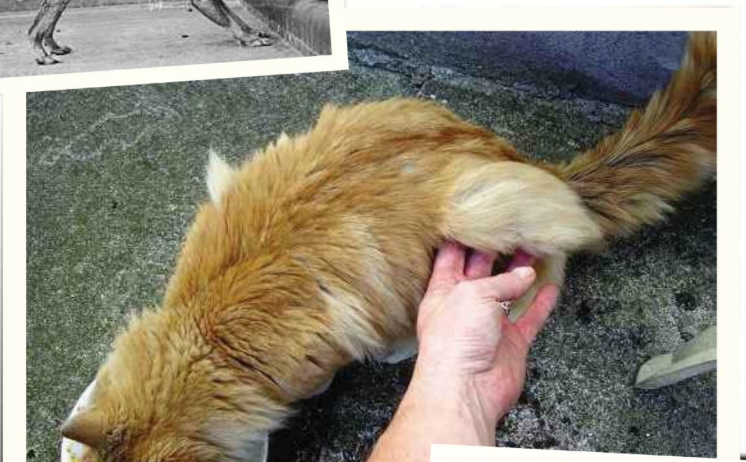
IRELAND'S FIRST WINGED CAT?

Although winged cats have been recorded from many parts of the British Isles, there has never been a confirmed case in Ireland – so I am delighted to have received the following details from Malcolm Blacow:

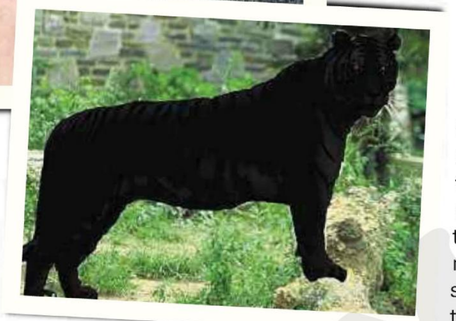
"For over a year now, a semi feral cat has been living – on and off (and after seeing off the previous tenant) – in my garden in South County Dublin. It is a cute and affectionate ginger, as the attached photos will attest, and is quirky in its nature; it constantly wags its tail, which I always took for a cat communicating that it may well like you, but is considering killing you very soon. This one seems to do it in greeting too. This cat – which has been named variously Little Miss Monster, Little *Mr* Monster (it's not clear yet what sex it is) and The Bucket (for its eating ability) – originally showed no signs of the genetic mutation it now plainly exhibits. I'm not sure how old the cat is, but I get the feeling it's quite young so maybe that's a contributory factor."

As revealed from the photographs that Malcolm emailed to me, the cat's wings were located towards the rear of its back – a common site for wings in such felids. And as they appear well groomed, they are most likely to have resulted from the rare skin condition feline cutaneous asthenia (the explanation for true winged cats, as opposed to ones whose wings are merely clumps of matted fur). Since the photographs were taken, its left wing has been shed, but they do sometimes regrow. Meanwhile, it is fortunate that winged cats are not flying cats – otherwise the Dublin specimen could have been doomed to fly in circles, literally! *Malcolm Blacow, pers. comm., 17 April 2012*.

GETTY IMAGES / HULTON ARCHIVE / TOPICAL PRESS AGENCY



MALCOLM BLACOW



TOP: A thylacine in captivity, circa 1930.

ABOVE: "The Bucket" in action, revealing his/her wings.

RIGHT: Author's mock-up of a melanistic tiger.

TIGER, TIGER, BURNING BLACK

As first collated in my book *Mystery Cats of the World* (1989), there are a number of unconfirmed but plausible sightings on record of black (melanistic) tigers, but no adult specimen has ever been formally authenticated by science. (There is one verified specimen of a days-old incompletely melanistic cub that was killed by its mother and one white tiger cub that has begun to darken into a near-black specimen). However, from two independent eyewitnesses (Arkansas artist Bill Rebsamen and American cryptozoological researcher Nate Hanschen) I have learnt that somewhere out there is a large illustrated book documenting the Ringling Bros Circus that contains a photograph of what looks like a performing black tiger. The three of us have been looking for this book for some time, but during his investigations Nate has now a further yet hitherto unpublicised snippet of evidence, dating back to 1848, indicating that at least one such cat may indeed have appeared in an American circus. Appearing in Thomas Frost's book *Circus Life and Circus Celebrities* (1881), it reads as follows:

"John Powell appeared during this season [1848] at Astley's, and an additional attraction was provided in Van Amburgh's trained animals, to which there was now added a black tiger, a rare variety, and one which had never been exhibited in a state of docility before. It was introduced in the drama of the *Wandering Jew*, a story which was then creating a great sensation all over Europe; and Van Amburgh personated the beast-tamer, Morok, through whose instrumentality the Jesuits endeavour to delay the old soldier, Dagobert, on his journey to Paris, by exposing his horse to the fangs of a ferocious black panther."

During the 1800s, 'black tiger' was a term sometimes applied, albeit confusingly, to black panthers (melanistic leopards), so we must treat Powell's statement with caution. Even so, Isaac Van Amburgh was a very influential animal trainer and pioneer of animal acts in circuses, and numerous media accounts exist documenting his celebrated big cat acts. So if there was ever going to be a circus figure who included a genuine black tiger in his acts, Van Amburgh is very likely to have been the one. Consequently, this provides an additional line of investigation. If any reader can offer information concerning black tigers in circuses and/or has seen (or has knowledge of) the missing black tiger photograph in the elusive circus book, we'd love to hear from you. This has all the makings of a new 'thunderbird photograph' enquiry! *Nate Hanschen, pers. comm., 10 May 2012*.

MATT PATTINSON

ARCHÆOLOGY

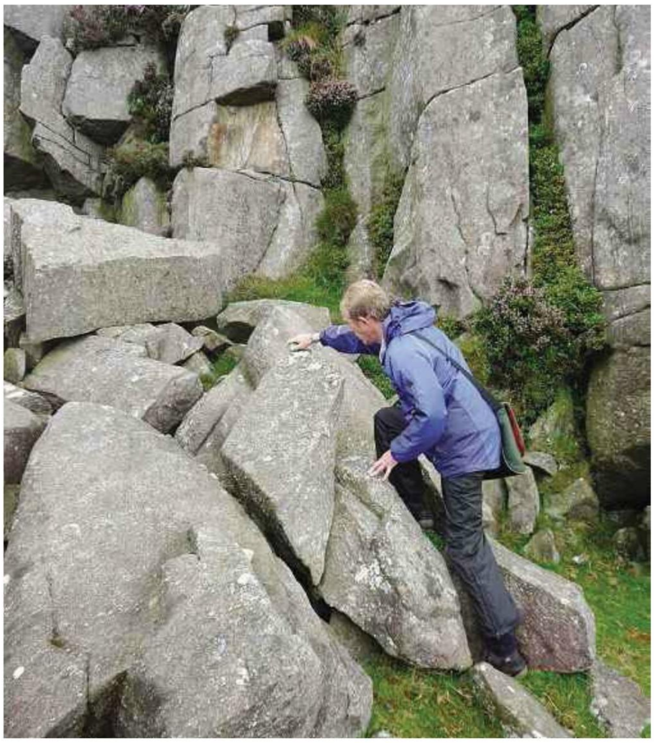
Our archæological round-up is brought to you by **PAUL DEVEREUX**, a founding co-editor of the peer-review *Time and Mind: The Journal of Archaeology, Consciousness and Culture* (www.bergpublishers.com).

SOUNDING OFF

There has been a media buzz about sound and archæology over recent months that has invoked your columnist's ire, so it is hoped readers will allow a bit of justified griping.

In a 16 February 2012 piece entitled "Scientists revive sacred sounds", msnbc reported on an experiment conducted by the Californian archæoacoustician Steven Waller. Two pipers in a field were asked to play the same note from a flute, setting up a sonic interference pattern between them. Volunteers were blindfolded and asked to walk around while this was taking place, noting where the sounds from the flutes were louder or quieter (where the patterns cancelled each other out). Waller then asked them to draw diagrams of the soundscape they had experienced. These were apparently closely reminiscent of the spatial positioning of the Stonehenge uprights. "These people were not told anything about interference patterns or Stonehenge; they were completely naïve subjects," he recalled. They were "flabbergasted" to find that there were not structures blocking the sounds at certain points. Waller reported that he had measured acoustic shadows actually cast by the Stonehenge megaliths and had found they accurately reproduced the interference pattern that would be generated by two flutes playing in the centre of the monument. This story was picked up by the BBC on 17 February, and doubtless other news media.

On 5 March, *Popular Archæology* published an article ("Ancient Builders Created Monumental Structures that Altered Sound and Mind, Say Researchers") that was not properly credited and was a whole mishmash of misleading information, telescoping different experiments (two of which your columnist was intimately involved with). In April, the BBC again popped up with the news about a sonic experiment (its exact nature not specified) conducted by researchers from the Universities of Salford, Huddersfield and Bristol concerning acoustics at Stonehenge. But because Stonehenge is now an incomplete structure, the team used a full-sized concrete reconstruction of it in Maryhill, America, which was built in 1929 as a memorial to WWI soldiers. One of the researchers, Dr Fazenda, who has been involved with the acoustic testing of the monument for four years, admitted that their work did not prove that Stonehenge had been built with acoustic factors in mind.



TOP: Using percussion to test for musical rocks (lithophones) at Carn Ingli, Preseli, Wales, source area of the Stonehenge bluestones.

ABOVE: Percussionist Z'EV making rock music with lithophones (musical rocks) on Carn Ingli, Preseli, Wales, source area of the Stonehenge bluestones, at the invitation of the "Landscape & Perception" project.

BOTH PIX: PAUL DEVEREUX / LANDSCAPE & PERCEPTION

The problem with this flurry of archæoacoustic interest on the part of the media is that it has no context, and journalists seem too lazy to try to understand the full range or relative worth of this type of research. That, allied in some cases with inaccurate reporting and what seems to be a kind of amnesia on the part of some researchers, is not serving the public perception of the study of sound at archæological sites very well. For instance, not only did the Salford, Huddersfield and Bristol team not use a prehistoric monument at all, but a concrete Stonehenge replica (so not a replica – concrete's physical characteristics are quite different from sarsen and bluestone), but Dr Fazenda (reportedly) had the cheek to say about their work: "We thought that doing this would bring an element of archæology that so far hasn't been looked at." Excuse me? Archæoacoustics at Stonehenge and elsewhere has been going on now for many years – Aaron Watson and David Keating conducted extensive acoustic research actually at Stonehenge and other megalithic monuments over a decade ago.

In any case, all this recently reported acoustic work relies on there having been musical instruments that may or may not have been played at Stone Age monuments. While worth exploring, it is inherently speculative research. Instead, what about the sounds of the monuments themselves – their echoes, the musical qualities of their actual stones, the sounds of wind and water at them? Sounds of the old stones we can still hear now, beyond artifice?

As regular readers will know, your columnist is a co-researcher with Jon Wozencroft on the Royal College of Art "Landscape & Perception" project, which is principally exploring the source area of the Stonehenge bluestones in the Preseli hills of Wales. The project has confirmed that there is a noteworthy percentage of rare lithophones (rocks producing metallic and even musical sounds when subjected to percussion) at the site. This of course raises a possible new factor in the mystery as to why the bluestones were transported all the way from Wales to Salisbury Plain – cross-culturally sounds from rocks were considered to be communications from spirits within them.

This was pointed out in a paper a year ago in *Time &*

Mind (P Devereux: "Stonehenge Rocks", July 2011, pp214–217). It should have been big news, but the BBC, msnbc, *Popular Archæology*, and other media apparently didn't see this, let alone grasp the significance of the research. Likewise, the project's website (www.landscape-perception.com) has very recently been hugely expanded, yet only *The Wire* (no.339, May 2012) reported on this exceptional piece of publicly accessible new research on sound and sight at Stone Age sites. Is nobody else listening? Where are all those journalists? Are they so keen on being served up a "good story" they just sit back and miss out more significant ones?

Okay, rant over. You can come out now.

BLOODY KNIVES

It has long been known that the Aztecs of Mexico performed human sacrifice, but evidence for it among earlier Mexican Indian cultures has been scarce until now. Thirty-one obsidian knives found in the central Mexican state of Puebla have been forensically examined by Mexican researchers using a scanning electron microscope, and blood residue, plus tiny fragments of muscle, skin and hair have been identified on them. This mix of body matter suggests sacrificial usage rather than some ritual bloodletting practice. The knives are about 2,000 years old, and linked to the little-known Cantona culture that flourished around the same time as the mysterious people who built the great, pyramid-punctuated city of Teotihuacan in the Valley of Mexico. This was a full millennium before the Aztecs. *[AP] Daily Democrat, 3 May 2012.*

PAUL DEVEREUX

BELOW: Replica of an ancient Mexican Indian obsidian knife.

CLASSICAL CORNER

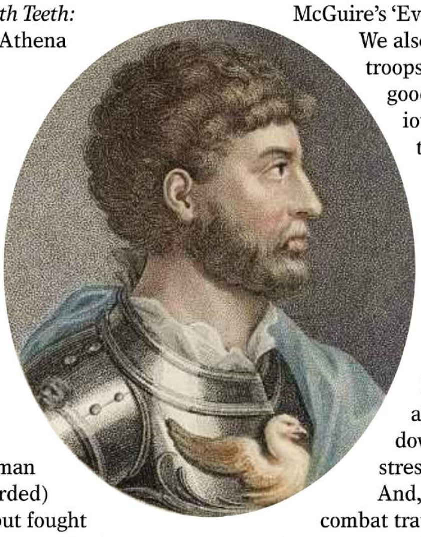
FORTEANA FROM THE ANCIENT WORLD COMPILED BY BARRY BALDWIN

152. YOU'RE IN THE ARMY NOW

"A hand [..] found on a battlefield – obviously a part – not beautiful" – Fort, *Books*, p8

Some ancient glosses on, and respite from, Afghanistan, Iraq, and other modern wars.

Lucius Siccius Dentatus ('Born with Teeth'), fifth-century BC soldier and People's Tribune, received 45 wounds in 125 battles, none in the back, winning enough medals for an entire legion (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, bk10 chs36–49; Valerius Maximus, *Memorable Deeds & Sayings*, bk3 ch2 para24 – Just think how many decorations he'd have won as an American, always supposing he ever got out of the M*A*S*H unit. (cf. Frank Baron, *Born With Teeth: History's Bravest Warrior*, Athena Press, 2009).



GETTY IMAGES / HULTON ARCHIVE

The Prussian Cæsar-worshipping Theodor Mommsen deemed him Rome's bravest-ever soldier. But, how do you quantify courage? No less impressive was Lucius Sergius Catilina (grandfather of Cicero's homonymous enemy), twice captured by Hannibal, twice escaped, wounded 23 (*that* fortean number again! – several other Roman soldiers are likewise recorded) times, lost his right arm but fought on to many victories with a prosthetic iron one – Step back, our movie Iron Man!

Of course, ancient soldiers kept their heads down, when not losing them. Romans and Carthaginians were so intent on the Battle of Lake Trasimene (217 BC) that they didn't notice a severe earthquake rocking the area (Pliny, *Natural History*, bk2 ch85 para200).

No ancient Richter scales to measure its force. For cognate bizarreness, I have seen footage from the Imperial War Museum of French peasants insouciantly harvesting only a few fields away from World War I action – for a moment, I thought I was watching Blackadder IV.

There were many cases of severed heads used for melodramatic purposes (**FT208:21**). When Nero's famously huge general Corbulo was besieging Tigranocerta (AD 60), he catapulted that of a captured Armenian nobleman over the enemy ramparts into their council meeting, thus impelling them to make peace (Frontinus, *Stratagems*, bk2 ch9) – would Mullah Omar's truncated bonce have that effect on the Taliban?

Buried under the stories of William Tell and Robin Hood is that of an ordinary Roman squaddie (*Corpus of Latin Inscriptions*, vol3 no.3676) whose epitaph brags that he could split an arrow in mid-air with a second one – that might impress even Phil 'The Power' Taylor.

Hard to imagine any modern soldier attempting suicide through boredom. Emperor Hadrian (below) (Justinian, *Digest*, bk49 ch16 para6 no.7) ruled that any such culprit receive dishonourable discharge. Nowadays, they might be encouraged (or not) by the camp radio playing 'Universal Soldier' or (as in Operation Desert Storm) Barry McGuire's 'Eve of Destruction'.

We also attempt to cheer up our troops with care-packages of goodies. Usually more ambitious than the one mentioned in the Vindolanda Tablets from Hadrian's Wall: "I have sent you two pairs of socks, two pairs of sandals, two pairs of underpants." The last were probably the most needed: from Aristophanes on, we hear (quite understandably) of men from generals down defecating through stress.

And, just imagine the post-combat trauma of men who (Livy, *History of Rome*, bk31 ch34) had seen and/or suffered "dismembered bodies, arms sliced off at the shoulder, heads separated from the trunk, entrails exposed, and other ghastly wounds".

Not just soldiers: "When the Romans take a city, one sees dogs cut in half and the limbs of other animals hacked off" (Polybius, *Histories*, bk10 ch15). Emperor Aurelian (AD 270–275), furious at the delay in capturing Tyana, declared: "I shall not leave a dog alive here." When the city, after its dogged resistance, finally succumbed, he told his troops to kill only the dogs; they obeyed, though this meant the loss of their regular loot.

American "Shock and Awe" and Bush swaggering in his flak jacket can't compare with Spurius Carvilius who (Pliny, *NH*, bk34 ch18 para43), rather than pull statues down, put up one of Jupiter made from defeated enemies' weapons so big it was visible 10 miles (16km) away, with enough metal shavings left over to construct another for himself – a one-man Roman Mount Rushmore, albeit not quite enough to accommodate a Hitchcock finale.

MEDICAL CURIOSITIES

Brothers are ageing backwards, a girl born with no blood, plus a real-life Oompa Loompa

LEFT: Matthew and Michael Clark have reverted to childlike actions.

BELOW: Olivia Norton, who was born without blood.

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SWNS.COM / CASEY GUTTERIDGE

RETURN TO CHILDHOOD

Two middle-aged brothers who once had normal relationships and jobs have been forced to move back in with their parents after being diagnosed with a rare "Benjamin Button" disease. Matthew and Michael Clark have steadily regressed to the point where they now have the mental age of young children and need round-the-clock care. They were diagnosed with terminal leukodystrophy last year, a condition that is estimated to affect around 100 adults in Britain. The Clarks are the only siblings known to suffer from it.

> "Things which might interest a toddler interest them"

Matthew, 39, who worked in a Walkers Crisp factory, married in 1990 and has a 19-year-old daughter who is expecting a baby. His wife divorced him when he began to display early symptoms of the disease. When he lost his job, he was so confused he sat in a room with no food or electricity for two weeks because he didn't know how to claim benefits. He ended up living on the streets. Michael, 42, served as a gunner with the RAF but was discharged in 2010 after damaging his knee. He was evicted from his flat because he stopped looking after himself and doing basic household chores. He slept in a park for three weeks before finding a soup kitchen, which sent him to the Salvation Army. Staff there sent him to a doctor, who carried out an MRI scan and diagnosed the disease. They tested his brother and found he had the same thing.

Michael is now estimated to have a mental age of 10. He watches cartoons and giggles constantly. Matthew behaves like a toddler. The brothers are looked after by their parents, former prison officer Anthony Clark, 63, and Christine, 61, who were forced to abandon a retirement in Benidorm to look after their sons in Lincoln. "Both of them are very childlike now," said Mr Clark. "Matthew went out the other day and bought himself a train set and a Mr Potato Head. We will be out walking and things which might interest a toddler interest them. The other day we were walking home when Michael saw a balloon and pointed it out to us. He also has these awful episodes where he screams and shouts and says 'I don't know what I'm doing!' Because the disease affects his memory, he can't remember much of who he was. It's obviously worse for him, but it's terrible for us too. There is nothing we can do to help and we feel absolutely powerless." Mr Clark drew parallels between the disease and the 2008 film *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*, based on the F Scott Fitzgerald short story, in which an old man played by Brad Pitt gradually gets younger.

Leukodystrophy refers to a group of neurological disorders caused by damage to the myelin sheath, the protective covering that surrounds nerve fibres (axons). When the nerve endings are damaged, the brain stops sending out correct messages and the body is unable to perform basic functions. It is a genetic disorder but can also mutate spontaneously. There are known to be 37 strands of the illness, but there are believed to be many others. It is often misdiagnosed, as the symptoms can resemble those of a stroke, multiple sclerosis or Parkinson's disease. There is no cure, and it ends in death as the brain shuts down. *D.Telegraph, Sun, Metro, 1 May 2012.*

BIRTH OF SNOW WHITE

When Olivia Norton was born six weeks early on 10 September 2011, she was completely white: she had no blood and her heartbeat was dangerously low. She had a rare condition called fetomaternal hæmorrhage, which meant her blood had run directly back into her mother's circulatory system. Severe cases occur once in every 5,000 pregnancies. It can be spontaneous or the result of trauma.

Olivia's hæmoglobin levels

were just three out of a normal level of 18 – so low that the liquid in her veins could not officially be classed as blood. Given less than two hours to live, she survived thanks to two emergency blood transfusions that turned her pink. Her mother Louise Bearman, 31, and her father Paul Norton, 36, of Witham, Essex, suspected something was wrong when Olivia didn't kick for three days. When nurses at Broomfield Hospital in Chelmsford failed to spot movement in a scan, Ms Bearman had an emergency cæsarean. At birth, Olivia weighed 5lb 3oz (2.35kg). Six months on, she is in good health.

A second baby with fetomaternal hæmorrhage was born recently to Vicky Loan, 24, a single mother from Gateshead, Tyne and Wear. She too had an emergency cæsarean as daughter Ella's heart stopped in the womb. After intensive care, Ella was allowed home. *D.Mail, 3 April; Sun, 3+9 April 2012.*

Another baby was born without blood and deathly white in October 2010. When Oliver Morgan was born in Maidstone General Hospital in Kent, doctors were unable to find a heartbeat for 25 minutes. He survived against all odds after being given oxygen, gentle heart massage and a blood transfusion. He was also chilled to 33°C for three days to make blood flow away from his skin towards his brain and heart. The boy had almost bled to death after a rare condition called Vasa Previa formed an extra vein in the womb of his mother, Katy Morgan, 36, from Maidstone. It burst, and she woke up covered in blood 37½ weeks into her pregnancy. Rushing to hospital, she was shocked to discover the blood had all come from her baby. Oliver was born by emergency cæsarean and weighed 6lb 1oz (2.75kg). Fifteen months on, he was in good health. *Sun, 27 Jan 2012.*

ORANGE ALERT

Eating carrots turns Leo Barnett bright orange. The three-year-old, from Odiham, Hampshire, is believed to be the only person in Britain with hyper-beta carotenemia, meaning that his body can't digest carotene, a substance that gives food such as carrots and oranges their colour. His mother Angie, 40, first noticed the problem when he was six months old. "He'd had pneumonia and we were very close to losing him," she said. "His kidneys and liver had been failing, so that's where we thought the orangey-yellow colour had come from. But a month later he was still orange."

His family called him the Tango Kid or Oompa Loompa. Eventually, blood tests revealed he was missing a liver enzyme, so his body was unable to convert carotene into Vitamin A, which strengthens the immune system. Once he was taken off carrots and all other orange food his "Essex tan" gradually faded. Excessive amounts of carotene are not thought to be a serious health risk, but Leo's immune system is so weak that even a cold could kill him if he didn't take a daily dose of Vitamin A. *D.Mail, 8 Mar 2012.*

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TANGOED! Leo Barnett turned noticeably orange after he ate too many carrots.

KONSPIRACY KORNER

ROBIN RAMSAY, EDITOR OF LOBSTER MAGAZINE, REPORTS FROM THE BUNKER ON...

WHY THE BRITISH STATE IS ADDICTED TO COVER-UPS

If there has been a single theme running through this column it is that the conspiracies that matter are those of the state, rather than cosmic bogey men such as the Jews, the Illuminati or David Icke's shapeshifting reptilians. But isn't this an old-fashioned view? Are states still significant compared to the multinational corporations? Yes: the power of the corporations has been exaggerated (chiefly by them and politicians afraid to tackle them). Stalin's response to the putative power of the Church is apposite: how many divisions do the corporations have? When push comes to shove, the state still has the power.

But really we should always write about state conspiracies *and their cover-ups*. Because while a state conspiracy might be brief, covering it up (and then maintaining the cover-up), can last for decades.

Take the recently deceased Abdelbaset Ali Mohmed al-Megrahi (below), who in certain quarters will now live on forever as one of the architects of the Lockerbie bombing in 1988. A quick skim through the Scottish Criminal Cases Review Commission report on the al-Megrahi conviction restates what we knew already: not only did he have nothing to do with it, he was crudely framed by American state forces when the *realpolitik* of the invasion of Kuwait required that America point the finger of accusation away from Syria, whose support for the American attack on Iraqi forces was sought.[1]

GETTY IMAGES / AFP / MAHMUD TURKIA

If this is obvious to mere spectators, we may presume that the intelligence and diplomatic services of NATO member states know perfectly well that the Libyans had nothing to with Lockerbie – Tony Blair's rapprochement with Colonel Gaddafi in 2004 tells us this – but cannot say this; they feel unable to publicly buck the American line, absurd though it is.

A similar thing happened with the Mull of Kintyre Chinook helicopter crash in 1994 which killed 29, including senior intelligence and security people working in Northern Ireland. The official RAF report blamed the pilots, even though the Chinook helicopter in question had well-known problems which had caused previous crashes. But the RAF as an institution went along with the lie. Why? Because they did not want to blame the helicopter. Criticising Sikorsky is criticising an American company, which is criticising America.[2] This year, the MOD finally announced that it wasn't the pilots' fault at all: it was the helicopter. The cover-up lasted 18 years.

Why do our politicians, our state and its officials feel the need to toe the American line? When he was Foreign Secretary, the late Robin Cook explained this to Hugo Young: it is simple careerism; senior British military officers want (better paid, more prestigious) jobs in NATO – which is controlled by the Americans. And British spooks want American intelligence; and British politicians want to dine at 'the top table'.

In his entertaining account of GCHQ, Professor Richard Aldrich recounts a story about David Lange, when he was prime minister of New Zealand in the 1980s and going against the American line. The US ambassador arrived and told Lange that if he persisted with his policy the US would cut New Zealand off from its intelligence. "OK," said Lange, "It will give me more time to do the crossword."[3] Alas, none of the current crop of British politicians possesses such *insouciance*.

NOTES

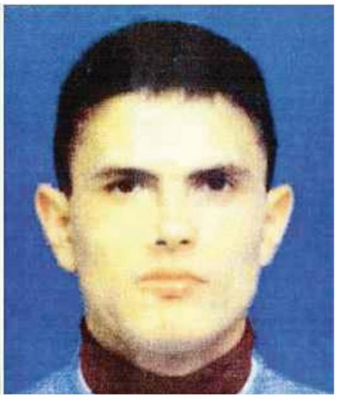
1 The SCCRC report can be read at http://bit.ly/JIzo1y (thesteamie.scotsman.com).

2 Google "Sikorsky + Chinook + crashes" and you will see by glancing down the first screen that a Chinook crash cannot have been a surprise.

3 Richard J Aldrich: *GCHQ*, Harperpress, 2011, p445.

CANNIBAL HOLOCAUST

The taste for human flesh seems to be one that refuses to disappear, even in the modern 'civilised' world.



TOP LEFT: Jorge and Isabel da Silveira launched a cult in Brazil that killed and ate "bad people". **TOP CENTRE:** Stretko 'The Butcher' Kalinic, a member of a Serbian gang. **TOP RIGHT:** Victim Milan Jurisic. **BELOW:** Tyree Lincoln Smith ate a homeless man's eye. **BOTTOM:** Alexander Bychkov under arrest after confessing to eating several people.

ON 11 APRIL, THREE CANNIBALS were arrested on suspicion of having murdered at least two women, eating parts of their bodies and using their flesh to make stuffed pastries known as empanadas, which they sold to their unwitting neighbours. Jorge Beltrao Negromonte da Silveira (51), his wife Isabel Pires da Silveira (51), and his mistress Bruna Oliveira da Silva (25), had founded a sect called Cartel, which aimed to purify the world and reduce the population. Police spokesman Democrito Honorato said they lured women to their house in Garanhuns, in the Pernambuco region of northeastern Brazil, "by offering them well-paid babysitting jobs", and killed them when "a spirit warned them they were bad people".

Police found two bodies in the garden, thought to be the remains of Alexandra Falcao (20) and Gisele da Silva (30), who had been reported missing in the area recently. "The details of the actions of the trio, with drawings and explanations of cannibalism, were found in a 50-page book written by Da Silveira, a man with a diploma in education and a black belt in karate," said Honorato. In the book, which was called *Revelations of a Schizophrenic*, Da Silveira said he heard voices and was obsessed with the killing of women.

The accused confessed to their crime, and said they planned to kill three women a year. They were tracked down after one of the women used a credit card belonging to one of the murder victims. Police suspected there were more victims. Neighbours burnt down their house the day after they were arrested. *dailymail.co.uk, 13 April; telegraph.co.uk, Independent, 16 April 2012.*

SERBIAN GANGSTERS FROM THE Zemun Clan in Belgrade beat Milan Jurisic, 37, to death with a hammer, skinned and boned him, and then put him through a meat grinder at a flat in Madrid. They made a facemask from his skin, cooked his flesh and ate him in a stew. Later they threw his bones into the River Manzanares. Sretko Kalinic, nicknamed The Butcher, confessed to the crime after being arrested in the Croatian capital Zagreb in 2011. In March this year, Spanish police found 50 bones in the river and located the house where the atrocity was carried out in 2009. Jurisic was on the run after being convicted in his absence of assassinating Serbian prime minister Zoran Djindjic in 2003. Police believe the cannibal gang was led by Luka Bojovic, arrested in Valencia last February and also accused of assassinating Djindjic. Officers found a letter suggesting Jurisic and Bojovic had fallen out over a woman. *Metro, 23 Mar 2012.*

A SUSPECTED CANNIBAL KILLER allegedly murdered a friend and boiled his head on the stove. Police who raided the Berlin flat of Michael Schneider found Carsten Schmidt's body parts wrapped in baking foil and paper. "It was a horror show," said a police official. "The body parts had been sawed, hacked and sliced. The head was bobbing in a pot on the cooker." Schneider, 43, slashed his wrists after police broke down the door, but was recovering in hospital. Bank worker Schmidt, 37, vanished on New Year's Eve. He was due to go to a party with Schneider, who was charged with murder. *Sun, 26 Jan 2012.*

ACCORDING TO CONNECTICUT police, Tyree Lincoln Smith, 35, was covered in blood when he told his cousin Nicole Rabb on 16 December 2011 that he had killed a homeless man with a hatchet. Ms Rabb said he had blood on his trousers, was carrying an axe and wanted a bath. "Smith told [Ms Rabb] the blows to [Angel Gonzalez's] head were so severe he was able to remove an eye from the man's head along with pieces of brain and a piece of his skull," said a police spokesman. Smith put the body parts in a bag and walked to a nearby cemetery. "At the cemetery he said he ate the eyeball, which tasted like an oyster, and the brain matter." The crime went undiscovered until a property inspector came upon Gonzalez's mutilated body in a vacant apartment in Bridgeport, Connecticut, on 20 January. Smith fled to Lynn Haven in Florida, where he was arrested five days later. *(Sydney) D.Telegraph, 27 Jan 2012.*

RUSSIAN POLICE ARRESTED Alexander Bychkov, 24, in the town of Belinsky in the Penza region, 350 miles (560km) southeast of Moscow. While being questioned on suspicion of theft from a hardware store, he allegedly told officers that he had killed several

people, eaten their livers, and buried them in a gully behind his house. Police found six bodies, with "cannibalism in several cases". They began looking into unexplained disappearances in Belinsky between 2009 and 2011. *BBC News, 26 Mar; D.Telegraph, 27 Mar 2012.*

MAN LOSES FACE

At about 2pm on Saturday, 26 May, Larry Vega was cycling off the MacArthur Causeway into downtown Miami, Florida, when he encountered what looked like a scene from *The Walking Dead.* A naked man was biting flesh off the face of another semi-naked man on the bridge's off-ramp at Northeast 13th Street (below). "The guy was tearing him to pieces with his mouth, so I told him, 'Get off!'" Vega said. "The guy just kept eating the other guy away, like, ripping his skin." Vega flagged down a Miami police officer, who repeatedly ordered the attacker to get off the victim. The attacker (later identified as a 31-year-old homeless man called Rudy Eugene) just looked up and growled like a wild animal. As the attack continued, the officer shot Eugene, who continued biting pieces off the victim's face and tossing them aside, as well as trying to gouge out his eyes. The officer kept firing until Eugene was dead. Witnesses said they heard at least half a dozen shots. Eugene's ex-wife, who divorced him in 2007, commented: "I wouldn't say he had mental problem but he always felt like people was against him type of attitude. No one was for him, everyone was against him." The victim, identified as Ronald Poppo, 65, a homeless man who lived under the causeway, was in critical condition at Jackson Memorial Hospital. He was unrecognisable, as 75 to 80 per cent of his face was missing.

Dr Paul Adams, an emergency room doctor at Jackson Memorial Hospital, suggested that Eugene was high on a street drug called 'bath salts', but this was yet to be confirmed by autopsy results. In October 2011, it became illegal to own or buy three of the chemicals commonly used to make 'bath salts': the synthetic stimulants mephedrone, MDPV, and methylone. "We noticed an increase [in 'bath salts' consumption] probably after Ultra Fest," said Adams. The electronic music festival was held in March in Miami. The physical trauma follows a pattern, he said: extremely high body temperatures, strong aggressive attacks using the mouth and jaws. "Extremely strong, I took care of a 150lb [68kg] individual who you would have thought was 250lb [113kg]," he said. "It took six security officers to restrain the individual." Some dim-witted news media misleadingly called the drug "a "new potent form of LSD". *[AP] (Toronto) National Post, Post Newsweek, Local10.com, 28 May; Toronto Star, Los Angeles Times, 29 May 2012.*

THE WAY OF SOME FLESH

- A British man was arrested in Thailand on 18 May after being found with six fœtuses that had been dried and covered with gold leaf for use in black magic. The remains of the unborn boys – aged two to eight months, tattooed and adorned with religious threads – were found in a suitcase in the Yaowarat district of Bangkok's Chinatown. Chow Hok Kuen, 28, who holds a British passport and was born to Taiwanese parents in Hong Kong, said that he had bought the fœtuses several days earlier for almost £4,000. He intended to smuggle them to Taiwan where they would be sold for up to six times the purchase price to people who believed that possessing them would bring wealth and good luck. If convicted, he faced a year in jail and a £40 fine.

The source of the fœtuses is uncertain, but every year 400,000 Thais have abortions, despite the practice being illegal unless the pregnancy is the result of rape or incest, or poses a threat to the mother's health. Fœtus worship is a Buddhist-animist practice described in ancient Thai manuscripts and known as *kuman thong* ("golden baby boy"). The belief is that if the owner reveres the ritual fœtus, its spirit will warn its possessor of danger and protect them. In practice these days, the fœtuses have been replaced by wooden effigies (usually). *D.Telegraph, Independent, 19 May 2012.*

- A television crew filming a reality show at Miami International Airport were shocked when US Customs agents found two human fœtuses in the luggage of two women returning from Cuba. The women said they had received the jar in Havana from a Santeria priest and were asked to deliver it to someone in Miami, but insisted they didn't know what was in the jar. They were released without charge. Santeria rites usually involve the sacrifice of small animals such as chickens and goats, and sometimes the use of human bones stolen from cemeteries. Human fœtuses are rarely used. *[AP] 24 Mar 2012.*

- South Korea has seized and destroyed thousands of capsules filled with powdered human flesh. On 7 May, the Korean Customs Service said that since August 2011 it had thwarted 35 attempts to smuggle about 17,450 such capsules into the country, dyed or switched into boxes of other drugs. They were made from dead babies and infants in Jilin and other areas in north-eastern China. The bodies are chopped up, dried, and microwaved in low heat before being passed through a herbal grinder. China's strict family planning laws are said to result in 13 million abortions a year, or about 35,600 a day on average. There are rumoured to be 'dying rooms' in hospitals where unwanted newborn babies are abandoned to perish.

Trading in human remains is illegal in China, but many people believe the capsules are a panacea for all forms of disease. In reality, they contain 'superbacteria' and other harmful ingredients, as well as hair and nail remnants. The smugglers said they believed they were ordinary stamina boosters and were ignorant of the ingredients or manufacturing process. They were released without charge. "Ethnic Koreans from north-east China who now live in South Korea are those who were mostly intending to use the capsules or share them with other Korean-Chinese," said a customs official. "They are normally brought into South Korea in luggage or posted in international mail."

Dried or ground placenta is also used as an ingredient in traditional Chinese medicine. Placenta is believed to be full of protein and nutrients, and traditional doctors believe it can help improve the immune system, slow the ageing process and cure kidney problems, impotence and infertility. The Chinese Ministry of Health banned the trade of placentas in 2005, but there is still a flourishing online trade despite warnings about the possible spread of disease. *[AP] 7 May; Independent, Metro, 8 May; D.Mail, 8+12 May 2012.*

the UFO files

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UFO CASEBOOK

JENNY RANDLES EXPLORES INTRIGUING LINKS BETWEEN THE WAY OUR MEMORIES WORK AND ANOMALOUS EXPERIENCES FROM PAST LIVES TO ALIEN ENCOUNTERS.

THANKS FOR THE MEMORIES

On 4 August 1980, Mrs Sage, who lived on the Medway estuary in Kent, had a close encounter. Walking to a local shop on this fine summer's day, she spotted a bizarre object emerging from a cloud of smoke and sparks. It was a small craft with a Perspex bubble at the front, inside of which were two unusual men – olive-skinned, blue-eyed and wearing jumpsuits.

Her encounter featured the classic 'Oz Factor' state, in which busy traffic became muted and a sweet and sticky odour of the still-evident mist clung to the picket fences. However, weirdest of all was that she walked on from this extraordinary scene, bought some peas, chatted to a friend about an upcoming wedding and promptly forgot all about her brush with the unknown. It was only weeks later when another sighting in Scotland was reported and triggered recall, that, bit-by-bit, Mrs Sage fully remembered what happened on that summer's day.

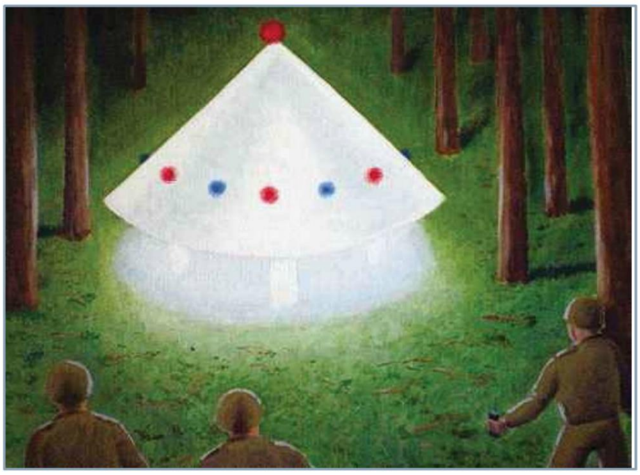
This case has always struck me as telling for many reasons. The Oz Factor state is a common feature of close encounters and suggests a kind of 'inward tuning' where the witness pays less attention to the external world and more attention to this ASC (altered state of consciousness). And the peculiar forgetting of something we would think unforgettable hints at a hidden clue. After all, there's something else we all experience that is very vivid and can feature extraordinary images but which we usually forget within moments of its occurrence – a dream.

Ninety-five per cent of what we experience in this state (a couple of hours a night, even for those who think they rarely dream) will vanish from our perception within moments of waking. In fact, unless we make an effort to transfer it into the long-term memory store of our brains, it will melt away forever.

This is not to imply that Mrs Sage dreamt her encounter, but there is evidence from psychological research that memory is not so much about remembering as forgetting – a process that is only just becoming understood.

REMEMBERING AND FORGETTING

In the 10 May 2012 issue of the journal *Neuron*, there are some experiments from the Neuroscience unit at the Scripps Research Institute in Florida. These identify how "forgetting is an active process" that involves a set of neurons responding to the neurotransmitter dopamine, and that as soon as any memory forms, these neurons begin the process of wiping them out. This process is tempered only when an 'importance tag' is placed on the memory, which is why we tend to recall vivid emotional events – or dreams – more than mundane ones. It's why nearly everyone can visualise their whereabouts on 11 September 2001; because their memory of everyday things that would otherwise have been eliminated by that dopamine surge was 'tagged' by the shocking events in New York City.



ROY SANDBACH

Forgetting is an active process in the brain's neurons

But how many of these tagged and supposedly 'forgotten' memories are still in there? Could they all be stored somewhere out of reach of normal consciousness ready to be released, as Mrs Sage reports? Indeed, I suspect many of you will have experienced an odd kind of *déjà vu* where something brings to your thoughts a flash of memory that you recognise as a long-forgotten dream.

Surprisingly little, beyond speculation, is known about this anomaly. It may be linked to cryptomnesia, identified almost 140 years ago when a psychic claimed to contact spirits but, it was established, had read the information in a printed obituary and then forgotten ever having done so. Jung popularised research into this phenomenon and proposed that everything we have experienced and remembered is stored in a deep recess of the mind and shut off from conscious recall to prevent mental overload. He argued that we have to forget most things to be able to remember the important stuff. But we only forget them consciously – they are still in there, ready to be awoken.

So, this odd but widespread experience of flash retrievals of old dreams – like the triggered recall of Mrs Sage's 'misplaced' UFO sighting – confirms that we have far more experiential memories than we realise. From hundreds of accounts of sudden flashback dreams collated in my research, they appear to become most accessible when you enter a mild ASC – such as when you drift off to sleep or engage in reverie, perhaps induced by meditation or some repetitive experience, like driving on a quiet road at night, when the mind can go on automatic pilot.

Meanwhile, cryptomnesia offers a possible explanation of many past-life stories, countering suggestions of actual reincarnation. A person being hypnotically regressed (a clear form of ASC) can seemingly 'tune in' to the deeper levels of their mind where these 'lost' stores of past information are located. If they access a tale overheard in childhood or a programme once seen on TV, then this could form the basis of an account wrongly presumed to be a 'past life' memory.

There are certainly relevant instances in ufology where a similar origin might be indicated – for instance where an alien contact retrieved via hypnosis looks likely to have been built from similar scenes in an old TV series.

More importantly, the very types of ASC that seem suitable for bringing out old dream memories – such as lying in bed prior to falling asleep or driving late at night – are exactly where the majority of alien contact cases seem to begin. A simple comparison of cases within vehicles illustrates this. In my files, over 70 per cent of alien contacts that begin inside a car involve single witnesses; and there are virtually no cases on motorways, as opposed to many on minor routes in the country. This either suggests exceptional alien selection of their victims or that these ambient conditions, and perhaps the states of consciousness they induce, are a trigger for whatever process retrieves those 'alien images' from deep within our memory store.

Memory affects UFO research in other vital ways. I've avoided mentioning the illustration of a UFO accompanying this article so that you would continue reading and subconsciously forget it. But I suggest now that you immediately close this magazine without looking again and find a pen and paper. Now draw that UFO and come back and compare what you thought you recalled with what is actually present. Perhaps in a week or two, without looking at the picture or your first drawing, you can attempt this exercise again. By all means let us know what you find.

This experiment seeks to replicate the real-life experience where a witness sees something unusual just briefly but is asked to describe or sketch it hours – or even weeks – later. Results show that our ability to picture what we saw is less than photographic, and the longer the gap the more likely there will be significant distortion.

All sorts of influences come into play. For instance, anything we have looked up in books or on the Internet, or forgotten memories of what UFOs look like. Again, we see this at work in real-life cases. For instance, one witness, convinced that what he had seen was Russian in origin, added to his testimony features of a spaceship from that country; the 'UFO' was later identified and lacked any such details.

I started to research how memory works because of a finding in my UK alien contact cases – a remarkably high percentage of witnesses (62 per cent) claiming to have vivid memories of very early childhood. It wasn't clear why this seemingly irrelevant fact should be important, but I suspected it must be. What we have discovered so far turns out to be significant.

EXTREME RECALL

Try to recall your earliest memory. I have done this with a sample of 35 people (20 female, 15 male) – none of whom profess to have had an alien contact – seeking to verify studies already done by psychologists and to get a comparative sample against which to judge the extreme recall being claimed by close encounter witnesses.

It's most likely that you don't remember anything more than fleeting snatches before about the age of three; less than 20 per cent of my sample could. Interestingly, that's over three times *less* than my alien contact witnesses, who profess memories back to birth – indeed, sometimes of actual birth and even life in the womb.

Some psychologists argue that memories from before the age of four to five are very unreliable, because our ability to recognise our selves as individuals and to categorise autobiographical memories depends on the maturity of the hippocampus and prefrontal cortex of the brain, which is slow to develop.

Prior to that, the amygdala is more important for recall, and this is emotion-driven. Because emotional recall is better in females, they are more likely to retain early memories. And this further explains why emotive events are better remembered by all, and at all ages. However, these differing memory processes mean that in earlier childhood we struggle to distinguish between recall of something that actually occurred directly to us and something we have heard discussed, built an emotional memory around and misperceived as personal observation.

Other factors are known to play a part – notably the development of the ability to verbalise. Again, girls tend to talk earlier and more fluently than boys, which in turn helps to code memory in a richer way from an earlier age. This may explain why the trend of more men reporting UFOs than women is reversed when we look at alien contact cases.

Several recent scientific studies have added useful insights. For example, a May 2011 report into what it called 'infantile amnesia' from the University of Newfoundland looked at 140 children aged between four and 13 and asked for their earliest memories and then, two years later, asked the same children again.

Children in the younger age rage (up to seven) had a rich recall of apparent memories from back to a few months old. However, when asked two years later, these had nearly all disappeared; their earliest recall was now of a different set of memories from age three-four upwards. Older children more often had the same recall in both interviews, but they started off with recall of events no earlier than age three.

This reveals that emotion-rich and possibly misinterpreted 'memories' from babyhood do get recorded for a while but then become repressed and replaced by the better-developed and differently processed post-age-three memories that we then take on into adulthood.

There are some interesting applications to the various fields of the paranormal. Take 'past life' memories again. I have come across cases where very young children, as soon as they start talking, spontaneously describe an apparent life before they were born, using phrases such as "when I was with my other parents" or "when I was an old man and fought in the war". Almost all such recall disappears by around the age of eight.

So the question is: are these memories of an actual past-life experience that get repressed, like baby memories, when we develop an image of self and verbalisation skills? Or are they snatches of conversation or war films on TV overheard in the cot and overlaid with a false personal context by our developing memories, misleading us into thinking we have lived past lives?

Intriguingly, I have also collected examples of childhood memories of pre-birth experiences. These are surprisingly common in children aged three–five, but almost all vanish soon afterwards. They include vivid descriptions of life in the womb, and some include details that the children could not have been expected to know (a twin who correctly described the fœtal orientation of the other twin, for example).

There are also some strange cases where children describe what they think of as a point before they were conceived. They talk about being in some place where they are given a choice as to how they should 'come to Earth' and the circumstances of their birth. There are parallels with other phenomena in my files – near-death experiences and alien contact cases where the witness talks of being 'sent' to Earth as some kind of experiment.

This research is still ongoing and I would be interested in hearing from any readers with stories about memories of the womb or life before birth.

FANTASY OR REALITY?

So why do alien contact witnesses have such apparently remarkable early life recall? Jayne from Kansas was a nurse in a UK cancer hospital and claimed various paranormal and alien contacts that began when she was only a few weeks old, such as being in her pram with a ball of light hovering above her. It's worth adding that she started to talk unusually early (something mentioned by other alien contact witnesses) and also had a rich dream life, which included lucid dreams, flying dreams and out-of-body experiences.

Or take Gwyneth, whose experiences began as a young child in Wales in the 1950s and involved all sorts of early memories in which odd lights were seen and figures appeared in her bedroom and walked right through walls. Her ongoing childhood experience of out-of-body experiences and lucid dreams took her into adulthood seeking a framework around which to place her encounters. At first she adopted a belief that she was a medium in contact with spirits. Then, alien abductions became reported in the 1980s and she grafted this onto her life story as the best fit for what was happening. Doctors meanwhile suggested she had an undetected physical problem with her brain and psychologists that she just had a "gifted imagination".

Who was right? Undoubtedly, there is a pattern. Those who have a track record of extraordinary visual phenomena tend to retain a better than average recall of very early life. How their ability to remember (and forget) evolves during early childhood seems to help predicate the alien contact and other paranormal episodes that are then sprinkled throughout their lives.

This same pattern of unusual early life recall has been reported by those researching such diverse subjects as NDEs or imaginary childhood friends, while people diagnosed as being FPPs (fantasy-prone personalities, whose vivid fantasies are often mistaken for reality) display this trait in psychological studies.

Again, this implies some disconnect between these various groups of people and the normal path most of us follow when developing memory, forgetting and visualisation. A highly developed capacity for imagery and a richer store of memories are involved. But does this mean that these people are simply gifted imaginers – who see things that are not 'really' there? Or did the rest of us once possess this natural path into other realities that usually becomes blocked by dopamine-fed inhibitions when our brains develop 'normally'?

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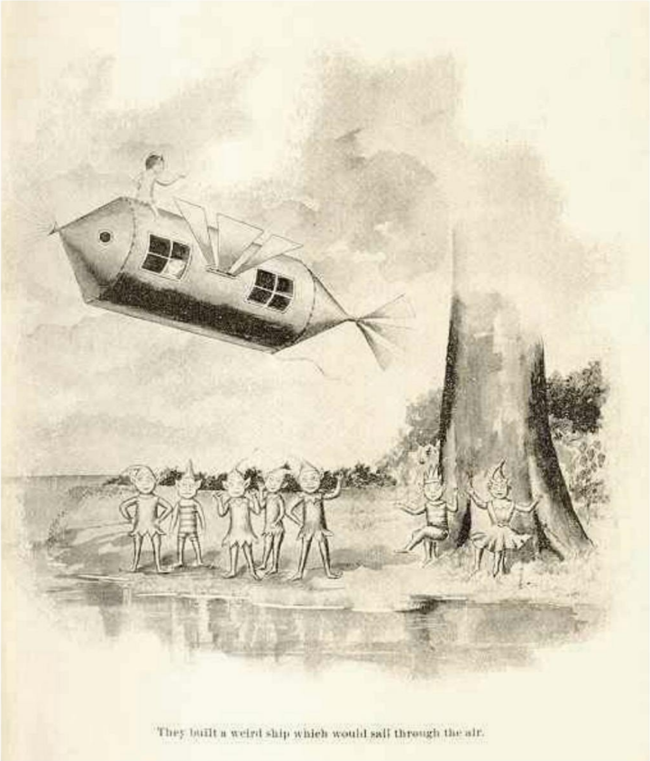
FAIRIES, AIRSHIPS AND SPACE TRAVEL

THEO PAIJMANS uncovers a forgotten subgenre of children's literature that mixed traditional fairy lore with the new technology of the airship.

Long before ufologists and forteans began to note certain similarities between the lore of the wee folk and that of the UFO phenomenon, a connection between fairies and airships had already been established in children's fiction, some of it written by children themselves.


They built a weird ship which would sail through the air.

LEFT: *The Winged Ship*, 1897, told of brownies and their airship.

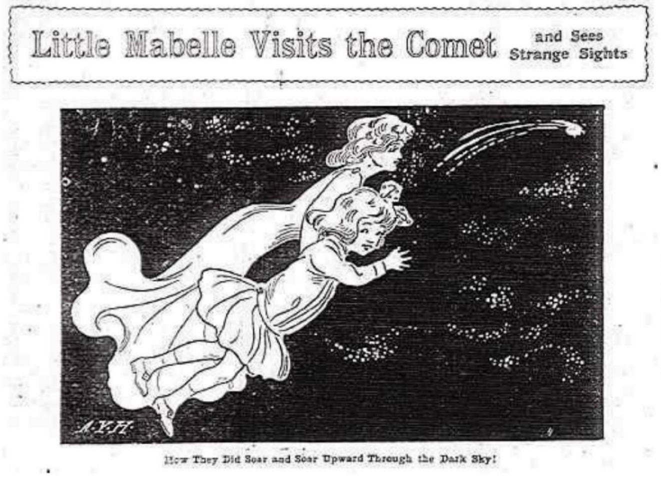
> "The wood, of incredible lightness, was brought through a trap-door from the grove of a friendly gnome... two or three old crones wove the sails of thread of swansdown strung from peacock's tails."

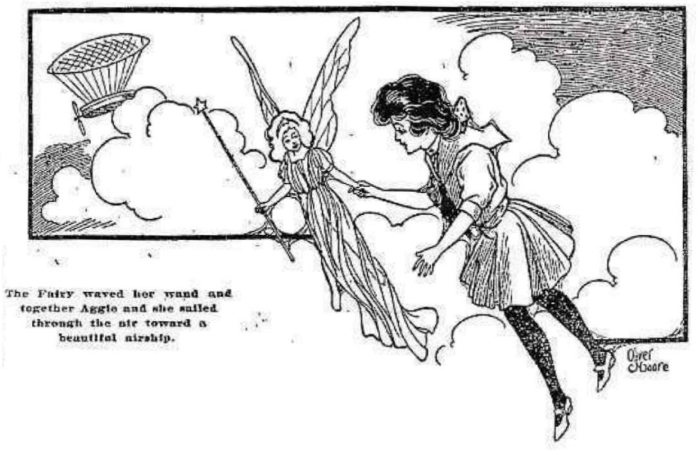
Perhaps the earliest example is found in an obscure title that was published in the famous airship year of 1897, the events of which may very well have served as an inspiration for the writer. The book, written for children, was called *The Winged Ship* and was published in Indianapolis, Indiana. In it, the brownies build an airship and travel with it through the ether. Solon L Goode was the book's author, and it features a number of interesting illustrations by his wife, Vinnie Ream Goode. These illustrations bear some resemblance to eyewitness sketches found in the canon of UFO literature.

Fairies also build a flying ship in William Timlin's *The Ship That Sailed To Mars*. The book was published by Harrap in 1923 in an edition of only 2,000 copies. Like Solon L Goode, who had written his story for his son Jamie, Timlin's book, exquisitely illustrated by the author, also began as a story created specifically for his son. Timlin describes the sorrows of an old man, who as a youth dreamt of sailing to Mars, the Moon "and the more friendly planets". Since scientists and astronomers deemed it impossible, the old man has forsaken the company of his fellow men, but not his belief in the fairies. Because of his faith, the fairies come to him, and the old man "chose those with cunning skill as craftsmen to help him and started a shipyard". After many a failed experiment, they succeed in building a ship that can fly: "The wood, of incredible lightness, was brought through a trap-door from the grove of a friendly gnome, and two or three old crones wove the sails of thread of swansdown, and ornamented them with colours strung from peacocks' tails." They load the vessel with suitable presents for the king of Mars, since "the Fairies have a legend regarding the dwellers there. And they think not as the Astronomers do, that there are dubious things on Mars, and unmentionable people. Moreover they have known from oldest times that on Mars there dwell those Fairies who fled the Moon when that unhappy planet cooled from sunny opulence to clearest shimmering ice." So prepared, the ship then flies to Mars.[1]

As well as the very limited print runs of books such as *The Ship That Sailed To Mars*, this type of story circulated to a wider readership in the newspapers of the day. In February 1907, the *Washington Post* published a story for children by Helena Davis, entitled "Bricktop and The Twins Find A New Friend". In it, a group of three children, Bricktop, Bettie, and Lettie, decide to visit their grandmother. On their way, each is telling a story. Lettie's tale is set on the Moon, a beautiful place covered with fruit and flowers; castles made of "azure air" crown green hilltops where the fairies live. They have an effective method of warfare. Instead of killing their enemies, they use a certain flower filled with a strange narcotic that causes deep sleep to anyone who breaths it in. This is the fate of a man from Earth, an inventor, and a man from Mars, who had landed in an airship on the Moon to destroy the Moon fairies. After begging to be set free, the two men are allowed by the fairies to depart in their airship, never to return.[2]

In September 1908, an American newspaper published the children's tale "Aggie and the Tree Fairy", written by Maud Walker. Its central illustration features a little girl being taken by the hand by a female fairy with a wand, "sailing through the air toward a beautiful airship".[3] In 1910, the theme was repeated in the short story "Little Mabelle Visits the Comet and Sees Strange Sights". One evening, a little girl called Mabelle goes to sleep after having listened to her father's excited tales about a comet, thinking of the "wonderful bodies that sailed through space, on one of which she was an insignificant speck. She marvelled at the immensity of space and the great distances travelled by planets and comets." Just as she is falling asleep, she hears a soft tapping at her window and sees, to her wonder "a white clad figure standing there". Mabelle wonders how this is possible, as her room is on the second storey without a balcony or porch under her window, but the woman, approaching Mabelle, explains: "Little girl,


Little Mabelle Visits the Comet and Sees Strange Sights
A.Y.H.
How They Did Soar and Soar Upward Through the Dark Sky!


The Fairy waved her wand and together Aggie and she sailed through the air toward a beautiful airship.

ABOVE LEFT: This children's story in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* described a fairy taking Mabelle for a trip through space. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Maud Walker's "Aggie and the Tree Fairies" in the *Edwardsville Intelligencer* told of a little girl "sailing through the air towards a beautiful airship".

would you like to visit the great comet with me? I am a fairy and can go where I please, even though it be to distant planets. I often visit the moon and Mars." So off they go and visit the comet. The tail of the comet, Mabelle sees, consists of "billions of dear little fairies and rose wreaths". Just as they are about to visit the main part of the comet, Mabelle is awoken gently by her mother.[4]

Children too were involved in exploring this theme and wrote little stories themselves. The newspapers which carried these tales usually ranked them highly and often published them on their pages for youngsters, sometimes in connection with a story contest. In 1910, Ethel Holsinger saw her story "The Moon Fairies' Visit to Mars" published in the *Washington Post*. The Moon Fairies travel to Mars by way of a cloud; they meet the Sun fairies, the cloud fairies and the good fairies of Mars.[5]

In 1925, 12-year-old Ruth Hanson won the first prize with her short story "On The Green Cheese". Her story opens as follows: "Swinging idle in the hammock one June day, I sat up with a start, for there, perched on the edge of the hammock was a tiny elf, who was poking with his cane. He wore a red coat trimmed with pink oak leaves. His trousers were of a sky-blue cloth, spun by Mrs Bug, out of her silken web. Under his fawn-colored cap peeped his tiny face, which reminded me very much of a dried apple. Beside him was his airship, fashioned from a green leaf with small twigs protruding from the sides supporting the silken wings woven from a spider web.

"'How would you like to go on a trip to the moon this evening, with me?' asked the elf."[6]

Tales such as these were also published as children's bedtime stories in several American newspapers. 1914, for instance, saw the publication of a short tale, "The Fairies' Trip to The Stars", presented as a bedtime story told by a father to his children. In it, the fairy queen decides one day to visit the stars and tells the fairies: "We have an invitation to visit the stars tonight, and an airship is all ready for us." The airship itself was made of "the loveliest silver cloud, and it was so soft and comfortable". The fairies spend all night going from star to star along the Milky Way and "seeing the life up in the sky" before returning to the Earth in the morning.[7]

A year later, we find the following scene in a children's tale "On The Yankee Doodle", in which three children, Carlotte, Marietta and Charles, have built a make-believe airship from some kitchen utensils. But then: "From somewhere came a voice the like of which they had never heard before. 'Hello, big children!' it said.

"'Oooo!' exclaimed Charles, 'Look up there!' And he pointed to a branch overhead.

"Then they saw a tiny man sitting astride a twig. He was dressed in blue with gold braid on his sleeves. He was not more than four inches [10cm] tall."

He asks the children if they really want to visit the places they dream about in their make-believe airship. The three children readily agree and the fairy – for that is what he is – climbs down, looks at his watch, waves his little stick, and off they fly.[8]

In another bedtime story, written by Blanche Silver and published in 1924, little Bobby gets as a present from his uncle a miniature toy airship. He plays with it all evening and then hangs it at the head of his bed. "Then a strange thing happened. Bobby was lying in bed watching it when suddenly, the wee little painted people seemed to be moving. One little lady in a bright blue jacket leaned far out of the window and waved. Just then the airship pulled itself free from the bed post and floated down to the coverlet on Bobby's feet. A wee little man hopped out and called to Bobby! 'Come on, we won't be gone long.'"

They sail through the window, high up in the sky, when suddenly a glow fills the car. They arrive at a beautiful golden castle, when he is woken up by his mother. But, the story concluded, "every night Bobby dreamed that the wee paper people painted on the windows came to life and took him somewhere."[9]

In the 1950s, when the UFO phenomenon had already become ingrained in popular culture, this children's literary tradition morphed with it in subtle ways. In the children's story "Santa and the Mars King" by Lucrece Hudgins Beale, serialised in 1954 in several American newspapers, a boy named Tom finds a little man, "blind and lost". The man is sitting in a bush, but no tracks lead to it. Tom decides that the little man must be from a flying saucer, so he takes him back to Santa Land, where he tells Santa and the elves and fairies about his find. The little man mutters the words "Gnik morf Sram" over and over to himself in a language that neither Tom nor the fairies can understand. Santa does: "'His words are spelled backwards', said Santa. 'He says, King from Mars!'"[10]

This overlooked literary tradition demonstrates the early fascination with fairies, airships and space travel all blended in a curious mixture, long before Jacques Vallée's seminal *Passport to Magonia: From Folkore to Flying Saucers* was published in 1969. And one wonders – how many of those children, having grown up, might have seen a UFO whizzing through the sky, and how many would have then remembered these tales they read in their childhood?

NOTES

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8 Annette Angert: "On The Yankee Doodle", *Fort Wayne Weekly Sentinel*, Fort Wayne, Indiana, 3 Apr 1915.

9 Blanche Silver: "Good Night Stories. Bobby's Airship", *Evening State Journal And Lincoln Daily News*, Lincoln, Nevada, 25 Mar 1924.

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TERROR IN THE THAMES

As a goose-eating monster lurks in the waters of London's Olympic Park, **NEIL ARNOLD** considers the long line of unlikely beasts – from alligators and giant catfish to sharks and sea serpents – spotted in the capital's great river and its tributaries.

On 14 December 2011, the *Daily Mail* ran the story of the "Olympic Park beast", after Mike Wells came forward to report that he'd seen a 16lb (7.3kg) Canada goose dragged beneath the surface of the River Lea by an unseen predator (**FT285:8**; see also **204:5** for a similar occurrence in 2005). He told the newspaper: "We were just passing the time of day looking at a Canada goose 30 yards away, but then it just suddenly disappeared. It went down vertically. There wasn't any hesitation, it went straight down. It didn't come back up. My friend and I looked at each other slack-jawed."[1]

LEFT: A detail of one of the fishy street lamps that line the Thames.

NEIL ARNOLD

The search was on for the 'killer beast', the newspaper adding that "the number of swans on the river and waterways near the newly built £9bn Olympic Park is also dropping", with many people fearing that a large pike, "pet alligator or snake" was on the loose.

The River Lea is an ancient waterway, first recorded in the 9th century. It originates at a spot known as Marsh Farm in Luton, Bedfordshire, and winds its way south to the Thames via the Chiltern Hills. Over the years, I've collected numerous accounts of peculiar inhabitants of the Thames and its tributaries, so it was no surprise to hear that the River Lea had a monster story. I've visited stretches of the Thames ever since I was a child, and heard tales of monster catfish, out-of-place alligators, snapping turtles and even intrusive sharks.

MIKE WELLS SAW A CANADA GOOSE BEING DRAGGED UNDER

Many believe that the River Lea beast is a Wels catfish, a creature native to the waters of central, southern and eastern Europe which can reach a length of 9ft (2.7m) and weighs some 300lb (135kg). In some parts of the world, there are even rumours that such creatures have dragged humans underwater. In May 2012, researcher Richard Freeman of the Centre for Fortean Zoology (CFZ) visited the Olympic Park area and also became convinced that a Wels catfish was the culprit (see panel: "In Search of the Olympic Monster").[2]

This make sense when we recall the case of 15-year-old Oliver Parker-Grater who, in 2005, battled a 40lb (18kg), 5ft (1.5m)-long Wels for some 90 minutes in the River Darent, a Kentish tributary of the Thames. Oliver wasn't quite sure what he'd caught – and was unaware of the implications of such a creature inhabiting a Kentish river – and so released the catfish back into the water, much to the frustration of one Mr Adrian Saunders, who'd been hunting the elusive monster for a while.[3]

"We think the fish was illegally imported," stated Mr Saunders on the BBC website, "and stocked in a gravel pit in the Sundridge area, which is upstream of Eynsford. He was then washed out of the pit during the floods at the start of this year and escaped into the Darent. We do not believe anyone would put a fish of this size deliberately in a small river like this."

To locals the catfish became known as 'Darren'. But was it the same creature that killed the Canada Goose at the Olympic Park? Interestingly, in July 2008, 28-year-old labourer Brett Ridley

HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

ABOVE: A sturgeon arrives in a London shop in 1947. This impressive specimen was caught in the Channel, but there are reports of similar ones in the Thames
BELOW: A snapping turtle, another agressive predator reported from London's rivers after many pets were released.

caught a large Wels catfish on the Kingston stretch of the Thames. The beast, weighing around 60lb (27kg), took 45 minutes to land.[4] It was no match for the 206lb (93kg) catfish caught in Spain in 2006, but was still a formidable predator. In the same month, a catfish caused a stir in a stretch of the Thames between Weybridge and Walton, when anglers began speaking of a 50lb (23kg) Wels catfish and rumours of similar specimens being dumped in the waters since the 1920s.

Simon Clarke, chairman of the Catfish Conservation Group, is unsurprised by tales of wels in the River Lea. "There are wels catfish present in around eight rivers in the UK, including the Thames," he says, "so it is quite possible for a few to be in the Lea. However, it's important to state that wels catfish have never established a significant population in any UK river, where climate restricts breeding success and ability for fry to grow in river environments with so many potential predators".

TO LOCALS THE DARENT CATFISH BECAME KNOWN AS 'DARREN'

UNUSUAL SUSPECTS

While a number of Wels catfish could exist in the Thames and adjoining rivers, another suspect for the River Lea monster might be the sturgeon (an identity sometimes suggested for the Loch Ness Monster). In 2005, a badly decomposed specimen – thought to be a diamond sturgeon – was found near the Blackfriars Railway Bridge.[5] Geoff Maynard, writing for angling website *Fishing*, commented in 1999 that: "Legend has it that my own local river, the Thames, had them in abundance throughout its length at one time. The last documented record of a Thames sturgeon that I can find was of a 66lb [30kg] fish caught at Putney by Lewis Gibson in May 1867."

It's perhaps unlikely that a sturgeon is eating the geese in the River Lea, and another culprit put forward has been the otter. Otters have been observed in the Lea, and would certainly take an injured goose, although they prefer fish, frogs and smaller birds. As late as the 1930s, the Thames and its tributaries were home to the 4ft (1.2m)-long creatures, which are thought to be making a comeback now that the waters are far cleaner than in recent decades.[6] It's interesting that the lower Lea Valley, where otters once lived in abundance, was being prepared for the Olympics back as early as 2005, and a wildlife corridor was being created to harbour all manner of species. A lot of rubbish had to be cleared from this stretch of water – but this would not have deterred one of my favourite suspects: the snapping turtle.

Such a beast might seem more at home in the humid swamps of the United States, but this formidable creature can live just about anywhere. The alligator snapping turtle is larger than the common snapper but, along with terrapins, these creatures were purchased as pets for children when the animated series and movie *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* became a huge success. These turtles would most certainly take a goose – their ferocious bite could easily snap a bone. In the 1990s, the ecosystem of Greenwich Park Pond was severely damaged when a mysterious predator began eating the ducklings, frogs, newts and fish. A snapping turtle was eventually dredged from the pond and sent off to an animal sanctuary in Kent.[7] An RSPCA Inspector, filmed for the ITV programme *London's*

GETTY IMAGES / DAN KITWOOD

IN SEARCH OF THE OLYMPIC MONSTER

RICHARD FREEMAN TRAVELS TO EAST LONDON'S RIVER LEA TO TALK TO THE MAN WHO SAW THE MONSTER ATTACK.

ETIENNE GILFILLAN

SIMON CLARKE

ABOVE LEFT: Witness Mike Wells. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Catfish expert Simon Clarke with a wels. **BELOW:** The area in the Olympic Park where the goose went down.

Recently, I was approached by a company wanting to make a film about a strange creature lurking in the River Lea, a tributary of the Thames which runs through the site of the 2012 Olympic Park.

There have been stories of some kind of large creature lurking in the river for years. Back in August 2005, boat trippers, including Mike Gallant of the River Lea Trust, saw a full-grown Canada goose – a bird which can weigh 16lb (7.3kg) – pulled violently and swiftly underwater by an unseen assailant. Soon afterwards, a number of cygnets suffered the same fate. Rumours circulated of an escaped crocodile, a snapping turtle or a giant pike.

The stories were forgotten until, in December 2011, Mike Wells, who lives on a riverboat on the Lea, witnessed a similar attack. Mr Wells was having a coffee on the houseboat of a friend, close to the Olympic basketball stadium that was being built at the time. They saw a full-grown Canada goose yanked straight down into the water by some powerful predator. The bird did not re-surface.

I interviewed Mike – a passionate naturalist whose houseboat is situated just beside the lovely Walthamstow Marsh nature reserve – who told me that the goose was about 100ft (30m) away when whatever attacked it pulled the bird under in the space of half a second.

"The bird just went vertically down," he said. "I was gobsmacked. There was no sign of what took it, but it was obviously pretty big. Some people I've spoken to think it could be a very large pike, and I've seen some turtles about a foot [30cm] across, but they're not really big enough to take a goose." He added that other people had seen attacks on birds – especially around Springfield Marina – in years past, but he had never previously witnessed anything like this himself.

The story brought back memories of the 'Monster of Martin Mere', a case the CFZ investigated back in 2002 when a creature "the size of a car" was said to have been attacking overwintering swans and geese on a wildfowl reserve (see **FT159:17**). The culprit turned out to be a wels catfish. I saw it with my own eyes: a thrashing, 8ft (2.4m) long beast, oily green in colour with a texture like wet PVC and looking like nothing so much as a huge, angry draught excluder.

Wels catfish *Silurus glanis* can reach lengths of 16ft (5m). They are found in eastern Europe, southern Europe and Russia, where they feed on a wide variety of prey including small mammals and water birds. There are records of large ones devouring dogs as big as German shepherds, and human remains have been found in the stomach of at least once specimen. It is thought that the Acclimatisation Society first introduced them into the UK in Victorian times. This was a group – whose members included Frank Buckland, Queen Victoria's Head of Fisheries – formed with the aim of introducing foreign animals to the UK for sporting and æsthetic reasons. Among their exotic introductions was the wels catfish.

The *modus operandi* of the Monster of Martin Mere and the Lea River Monster is the same: dragging the victim straight down in the twinkling of an eye. The wide mouth of a monster wels catfish could suck in even a full grown goose, whereas a huge pike, for instance, would bite at the legs and underside of the bird, causing more of a commotion.

It seems to me that the monster of the River Lea is indeed a huge wels catfish. The creatures have been in the UK since the 1850s and are now widespread. To take a full-grown goose it would need to be a big fish, in the region of seven or eight feet (2–2.4m) long, but it's quite possible that one or more such creatures are living in the Lea.

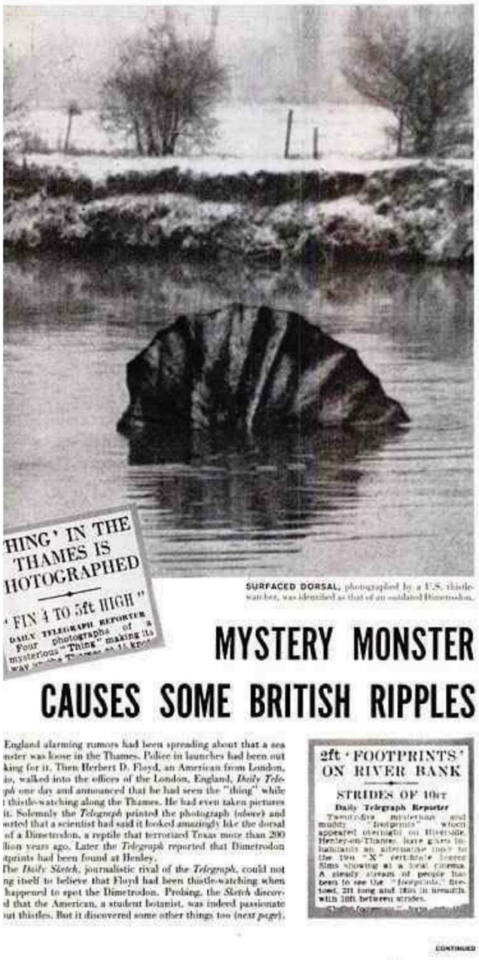
Mike was taken aback by the fact that the monster whose handiwork he'd witnessed was a giant catfish that shared his name.

"A wels catfish? That's amazing, as my name is Mike Wells."

He did, though, express concern that such a big creature might pose a threat to people, for instance the kyakers who use the river regularly.

I told him that while a wels catfish would be strong enough to overturn a small boat it was highly unlikely to happen; any Olympic contenders who take to the Lea should be safe enough.

ETIENNE GILFILLAN



HING' IN THE
THAMES IS
HOTOGRAPHED

' FIN 4 TO 5ft HIGH '
DAILY TELEGRAPH REPORTER
Four photographs of a
mysterious "Thing" making its

SURFACED DORSAL, photographed by a U.S. thistle-watcher, was identified as that of an outdated Dimetrodon.

MYSTERY MONSTER
CAUSES SOME BRITISH RIPPLES

England alarming rumors had been spreading about that a sea
nster was loose in the Thames. Police in launches had been out
king for it. Then Herbert D. Floyd, an American from London,
io, walked into the offices of the London, England, *Daily Teleg-*
ph one day and announced that he had seen the "thing" while
thistle-watching along the Thames. He had even taken pictures
it. Solemnly the *Telegraph* printed the photograph (*above*) and
orted that a scientist had said it looked amazingly like the dorsal
of a Dimetrodon, a reptile that terrorized Texas more than 200
llion years ago. Later the *Telegraph* reported that Dimetrodon
tprints had been found at Henley.
The *Daily Sketch*, journalistic rival of the *Telegraph*, could not
ng itself to believe that Floyd had been thistle-watching when
happened to spot the Dimetrodon. Probing, the *Sketch* discov-
d that the American, a student botanist, was indeed passionate
out thistles. But it discovered some other things too (*next page*).

2ft 'FOOTPRINTS'
ON RIVER BANK

STRIDES OF 10FT
Daily Telegraph Reporter

CONTINUED

MARKS OF THE BEAST. great footprints of giant stride, were found at H
ey, a gentle town famous for boat races. But *Sketch* was still suspicio

ABOVE: Press reports of a monster in the River Thames turned out to be a rag day stunt carried out by Reading University students.

Scariest Mysteries commented: "400 exotic pets each year are picked up as unwanted or dumped pets. Fifty per cent of these are snakes and other large reptiles."

GREAT FYSSHES AND ROGUE REPTILES

There have always been strange creatures turning up in London waterways. RS Fitter, in his 1946 book *London's Natural History*, writes: "In the year 1457 four 'great fysshes' were caught between London and Erith. They proved to be two whales, a swordfish and a walrus. If, as seems possible, the 'swordfish' was really a narwhal or sea unicorn, all the 'great fysshes' were in this case really mammals."

Whales have regularly turned up in the Thames, often making headline news (e.g. **FT207:22**), but some of the obscurer stories of alien invaders make for a far more startling read.

In 1997, a woman skinny-dipping in a Surrey reservoir near Heathrow Airport was bitten by an unknown predator. Experts believed it might have been a basking shark.[8] Although such a shark can inhabit freshwater, it seems more likely that a large pike or catfish was responsible. Mind you, sharks are not unknown in the area. In the 1780s, a shark – species not specified – was recorded in the Thames. Fishermen pulled in a very sickly specimen, which was taken ashore and cut open. To the astonishment of the men, a watch was found inside. The object, made of silver, bore the inscription "Henry Warson, London", and the number "1369". Further investigation revealed that a Mr Warson had in fact sold a watch to a Mr Ephraim Thompson of Whitechapel as a present to his son going on his first voyage on board the ship *Polly*. According to *London Online*, "About three leagues off Falmouth, through a sudden heel of the vessel during a squall, young Thompson fell overboard and was no more seen. The news of his being drowned reached his family, who little thought that they would ever hear of him again. Mr Thompson, senior, bought the shark, not for the sake of having it buried in consecrated ground, but to preserve it as a memorial of so singular an event. It was the largest shark ever remembered to have been taken in the Thames, being from the tip of the snout to the extremity of the tail 9ft 3in [2.8m]."[9]

There have even been reports of alligators in the Thames. *The Times* of 13 October 1836 records the story of the "Thames Alligator", stating that a Mr Arthur Willock, while steering his barge in the vicinity of Galley Quay, came across a strange, black object floating in the water. Mr Willock, his curiosity getting the better of him, decided to fish the motionless object out and, to his amazement, was met by an alligator, no doubt dead due to the horrific lacerations upon its body. With the creature hauled aboard, Mr Willock eventually saw the creature off to the Zoological Gardens of Surrey.[10]

Such an incident might seem confined to the foggy realms of London folklore, but in the autumn of 2005 another reptilian scare took place, this time at Tooting Bec Common, where it was alleged that an alligator was on the loose.[11] The RSPCA were called out to investigate, but their search for the 3ft 6in (1m) beast proved fruitless. RSPCA Inspector Ian Gough stated that it was more likely to have been a Bosk monitor lizard. This was confirmed when a monitor lizard was found, no doubt perishing due to the cooler temperatures of the UK. The story reached the *South London Press* of 18 November, which also mentioned that, a week before, a Nile monitor had been found alive in Lambeth Park. A few years before, an iguana was seen running up Brixton High Street, and in 2003 Croydon Council dismissed reports of a crocodile at a pond in Shirley as a hoax.[12]

In 1996, the carcass of a crocodile was dragged from the murky waters of a Dollis Hill pond by a Labrador belonging to an off-duty RSPCA Inspector.[13] They were taking an afternoon stroll when the dog began wading in the water, only to emerge with a rotten, 5ft (1.5m)-long carcass in its jaws. The decomposed corpse was sent off to London Zoo for analysis, but no further information was forthcoming. On a lighter note, in the summer of 1922 a William Brooks was charged for being in unlawful possession of a stuffed alligator.[14] Brooks told the Bow Street police court that he had been trying to sell the alligator for a woman who was "hard up".

One of the most unusual creatures to turn up in the Thames was a leatherback turtle, which, during autumn 1988, washed ashore in east London and was discovered by Tony Clancy and Steve Connor.[15] In 2009, *BBC News* reported on the blood-sucking lamprey now making its home in the Thames due to warmer temperatures and cleaner conditions.[16] The eel-like creature was discovered by 13-year-old Oscar Bridge during a clean-up of the riverbank in the vicinity of Fulham's Craven Cottage stadium. Another extraordinary find in the waterway was of a rare and protected species of seahorse *Hippocampus hippocampus* in 2008.[17]

PIRANHAS AND SEA SERPENTS

Over the last century, the Thames and its tributaries have gone through major changes. More exotic species being released, whether on purpose or by accident, into what were once inhospitable waters are now making themselves more than comfortable. Salmon, too, have made a strong comeback in the Thames. In 2007, it was declared that the water was clean enough for their glorious return – more than 200 years since their last residence. During the spring of 2009, jogger Birol Koca made an astonishing discovery on a lower tidal stretch of the river at Woolwich.[18] He stumbled across a walking catfish – a fish native to South East Asia that has the ability to walk across land using

THAMES 21

GETTY IMAGES / JOEL SAGET/AFP

ABOVE LEFT: 13-year-old Oscar Bridge with the lamprey he discovered. **ABOVE RIGHT:** A red-bellied piranha of the kind dropped onto a Thames boat by a seagull.

its stiff pectoral spines. The Environmental Agency, with the help of the Natural History Museum, identified the creature and stated that such a fish would have had trouble surviving in British waters. The same could also be said for the piranha which fell from the beak of seagull in early 2004 and landed upon the deck of the *Thames Bubbler* as it reached Dagenham.[19] Paul Hale, curator of the London Aquarium, confirmed the fish was indeed a red-bellied piranha and commented that "it would not survive in the low temperatures of the Thames". The biggest mystery of all was where the seagull had got it. Interestingly, in 2010, piranha were said to have been caught in the Buckinghamshire stretch of the Thames; perhaps this had something to do with the release of the horror movie *Piranha*. After all the fuss, the fish was identified as being a silver dollar.[20]

The River Thames would appear to be a hotbed for exotic species, ranging from Chinese mitten crabs, zebra mussels, the greater weever fish and even the occasional serpent. I'm not suggesting that a roaming sea serpent is responsible for the disappearing geese in the River Lea, but consider the fuss caused in London when the *Sarasota Herald-Tribune* of 24 February 1956 reported on a strange creature seen swimming up the Thames.[21] The previous day, the *Ottawa Citizen*[22] had reported that, "the sea monster… was first spotted in the river off Central London Sunday. It was going up river. One man said it had an enormous dorsal fin and another claimed it had 'big red eyes'. People who saw it told police it was about five feet in length". Hardly the size of your average sea monster, perhaps, although the report then concluded that "Ripples around it gave the impression of a 35ft [11m]-long body."

Sadly, the beast turned out to be a hoax perpetrated by Reading University students to promote their 'rag day'. On 12 March 1956, *Life* magazine covered the story and featured photographs taken of the 'monster' at the time.[23] This wasn't the first or last time a monster was reported in the river. In volume 15 of *Punch* (1848), a Mr John Skull wrote a letter about the "Sea Serpent in the Thames",[24] and on 9 November 2003 the Scottish *Sunday Mail* reported "Nessie's hols on Thames", after a floating model was sent up the river to promote Highland visitor attractions.[25]

THE RIVER THAMES WOULD APPEAR TO BE A HOTBED FOR EXOTIC SPECIES

So, is there really a sea monster in England's longest river? Probably not.

But whatever lurks in the waters of the Olympic Park – it's something that shouldn't be there! FT

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

NEIL ARNOLD is a full-time monster-hunter, lecturer and author of many books, including the recently published *Mystery Animals of the British Isles: London*, *Paranormal London*, and *Monster! The A–Z Of Zooform Phenomena*. His website is: www.beastsoflondon.blogspot.com.

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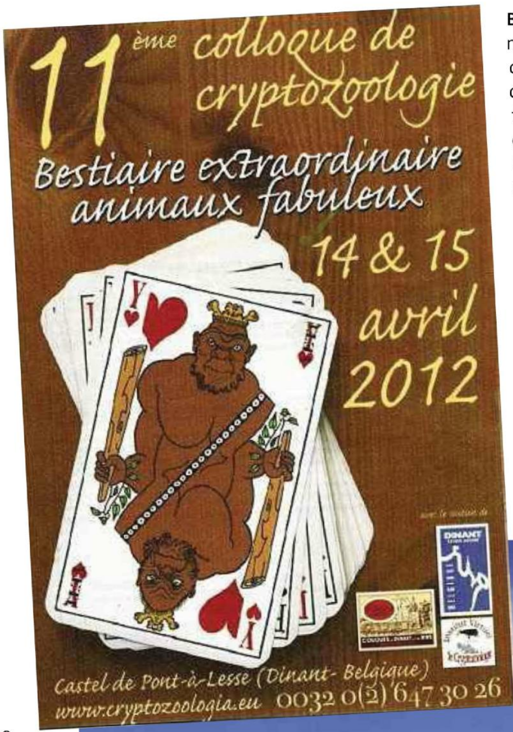
FBI FORTEAN BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

119. Colloque Cryptozoologie

MATT SALUSBURY attends a conference on unknown animals at the charming location of Dinant, Belgium.



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DINANT

The Belgian town of Dinant lies at the foot of the Ardennes mountains and at the end of the railway line from Brussels. You can do Dinant in a couple of hours, taking in the grey, onion-domed church and the cable car ride to the citadel that dominates the town. Local boy Adolphe Sax, the inventor of the saxophone, is immortalised in bronze, sitting on a bench on the pavement with his instrument outside *La Maison De Monsieur Sax*, "more or less on the spot where his original house stood".

But I wasn't in this underwhelming small town in Belgium to pay homage to Monsieur Sax. I had come to Dinant for the annual 'Colloquium of Cryptozoology' – a whole weekend of cryptozoology talks – in French!

The 11th *colloque de crypotozoologie* was in a nearby hotel that had its own forest within its grounds. The *colloque* had long breaks for meals – with cherry beers and chocolate mousse because, "we are in Belgium, after all." Talks were generally a shortish 40 minutes or less – of which I was glad, seeing as they were in a foreign language in which I had only a 30-year-old O-Level.

It was a cosy affair with less than 40 attendees. Most punters hailed not from Belgium but from France – a mother and daughter from just outside Paris, two Parisians of Russian origin and a retired couple all the way from Marseilles, another six hours by train after a change at Brussels. This made my Eurostar commute from London to "any Belgian station" (according to my ticket) look easy. I found those from the South of France easier to understand than either the Parisians or Walloons (Francophone Belgians), whose French was harder to follow.

Ornithologist Jean-Jacques Barloy kicked off proceedings, lecturing on (as far as I could tell!) "Audubon's mysterious birds". Apart from his better-known encounter with a huge 'Washington's eagle' (**FT262:44–46**), ornithologist and artist John James Audubon described in his 1839 masterwork *Birds of America* other birds unknown to science (**FT222:42–44**). These included the small-headed flycatcher, the carbonated swamp warbler, Cuvier's kinglet and Townsend's bunting.

The mystery bunting, based on a specimen sent to the Smithsonian by one John Townsend, may have been a more colourful bird that lost its pigment during its preservation or storage. Barloy says Audubon's mystery kinglets, warblers and flycatchers can be put down to his tendency to name birds based on their resemblance to bird families in Europe, when they were really not related at all. These birds were "misidentified or confused" rather than unknown.

Chemist and telecommunications engineer Michel Raynal said reading about the 'Florida Monster' in Charles Fort's *Lo!* had first got him into cryptozoology 30 years ago. The lack of concrete evidence for cryptids "poses a problem of proof", but Raynal gave examples of animals whose existence was correctly predicted – "in the total absence of sightings" – before their eventual discovery.

Charles Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace both noted that Madagascan orchids "each had a corresponding

BELOW: The mediæval citadel overlooks the town of Dinant, with its onion-domed church.

MATT SALUSBURY

pollinating insect", but for the magic orchid *Angræcum sesquipedale*, the pollinator was unknown. The 20cm (8in) nectar tubes sticking out of the magic orchid suggested that whatever pollinated it would need a proboscis around 25cm (11in) long. Wallace compared the "search for such a creature" with the then recent discovery of the planet Neptune – found by observing "perturbations" in other planetary orbits. Walter Rothschild discovered the mystery missing moth *Xanthopan morgana prædicta* ("predicted") in 1902; it had a proboscis of the anticipated length.

The entire population of the small, dark brown Guyanan lizard *Gymnopthalamus underwoodi* is female. It reproduces parthenogenically. Raynal said that many parthenogenic lizard species started as hybrids between two sexually reproductive species, and a sexually reproducing lizard *G.speciousis* was known from the same habitat. Some bits of DNA in *G.underwoodi* weren't in *G.speciousis*, allowing scientists to predict the DNA sequence of the missing species that hybridised to produce *G.underwoodi* – with considerable accuracy, as it turned out when the aptly-named lizard species *G.cryptus* was finally discovered in 1993.

Raynal also noted reports of rhinos from apparently rhino-free Gabon. The African nation of Gabon does, however, have some recently evolved ticks now feeding on a range of big mammals – bison, for example – but very similar to specialised rhino ticks. Rhinos' ticks are, notes Michel, easier to produce than "testimonial proof".

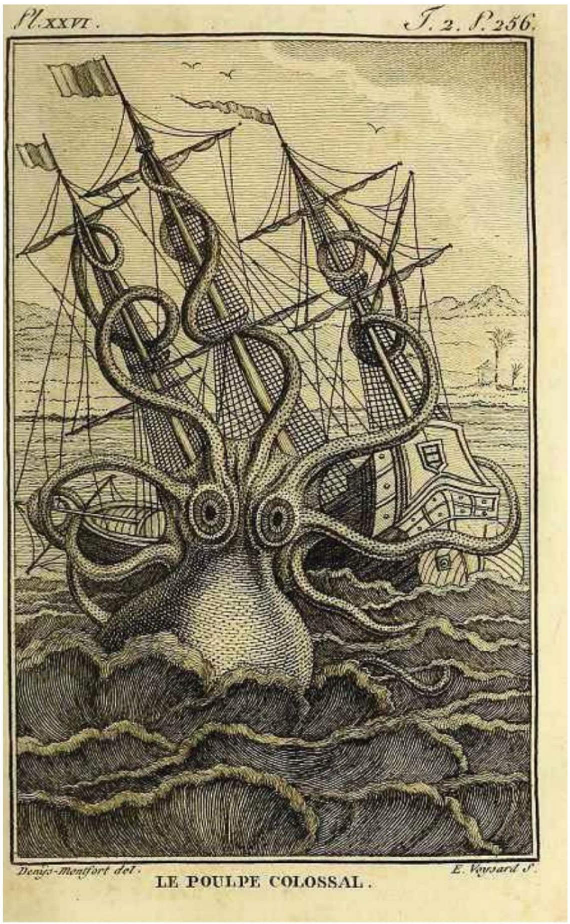
Doctor of cinematography Florent Barre looked at the now well-known giant squid, and the more dubious giant octopus or 'kraken octopus', once believed to lurk somewhere off the Cote d'Azur. Pierre Denys De Montfort's 1802 *Histoire Naturelle de Mollusques* includes a "colossal octopus" along with De Montfort's drawing from an ex-voto in the chapel of St Omar in St Malo, Brittany, giving thanks for saving the life of a sailor threatened by a gigantic octopus.

In De Montfort's drawing, the octopus's huge tentacles coil round the rigging of a ship. The problem is that De Montfort's is the only existing account or image of the ex-voto in the chapel, which was destroyed by Allied bombing in 1944. The ex-voto, possibly based on secondhand accounts collected from Dunkirk sailors by De Montfort, may never have existed. And elsewhere in *Historie Naturelle de Mollusces* there's a drawing of a common octopus looking exactly like its colossal cousin.

We were then treated to the 'Belgian premiere' of Marie Voignier's documentary *L'Hypothèse du Mokèlé Mbèmbé*, complete with English subtitles – hurrah! The film follows a permanently glum Michel Ballot through the dense, noisy jungle of Congo Brazzaville in search of the alleged living dinosaur. Ballot has a remarkable resemblance to scary German actor Klaus Kinski. His appearance and demeanour lend an already odd enterprise that otherworldly quality familiar from the tense Werner Herzog/Klaus Kinski going-mad-in-the-jungle movies *Fitzcarraldo* and *Aguirre, Wrath of God*. Ms Voignier couldn't make it in person, nor did she provide any more information about her mysterious (and highly recommended!) film, although she hopes to do so next year.

FLORENT BARRÈRE

FLORENT BARRÈRE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LE POULPE COLOSSAL.
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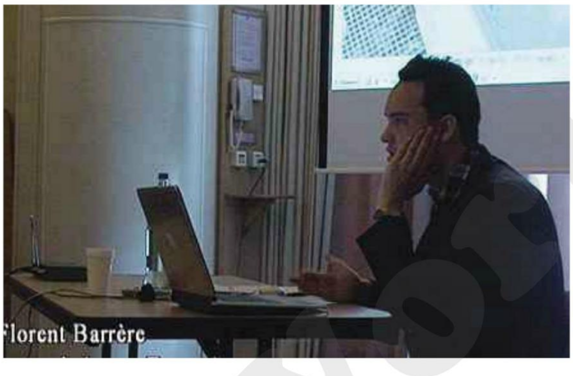
ABOVE: The colossal octopus.

RIGHT: Dr Catherine Gravel.

BELOW: Michel Raynal.

BELOW: Florent Barrère.



MATT SALUSBURY

Sunday's talks started early, so those with a train to catch in Paris could get there before French presidential election campaign madness gripped the city. The day opened with sixth-form college English teacher Alain Bonet. The fortean-tinged French blockbuster movie *Les Pactes De Loupes* (*The Brotherhood of the Wolf*) inspired him to research the 'Beast of Gévaudan' – the creature (or creatures) that terrorised a region of south-western France from 1764. Several official hunts, some with thousands of royal dragoons, led to several courtiers and military men ending their careers when attacks resumed again, before these fizzled out three years later.

Bonet found a surprising number of original documents still survive from that era. Some attacks were recorded twice or mistranscribed; one boy victim of *La Bête* became a girl in the next report of the same incident. From this data Bonet has drawn up "*the* definitive list" of *La Bête*'s victims – over 128 attacks, over 49 attacks with wounds, 104 deaths: total over 281. Most attacks were on girls or women, or males under 16 (adult men outdoors would have usually carried tools or weapons).

One of the two animals shot in hunts for *La Bête* was an "extraordinary wolf", smaller than an average specimen and with too many teeth. Hybrid wolf-dogs and unlikely wolf-hyena hybrids were among the explanations offered. Bonet suggests *La Bête* was a wolf demonstrating such unusual behaviour that witnesses misidentified it. While there are records of attacks on humans by wolves in Belgium, Germany and Switzerland, these were definitely wolves, not "*bêtes exotique*". Contemporary France had more of these, such as *la Bête de Toulon* and *la Bête de Cote'Azur*.

Father of cryptozoology Bernard Heuvelmans was, of course, Belgian, and Catherine Gravel, doctor of literature at UMONS University in Brussels, examined the 25 different "argumentative techniques" Heuvelmans employed in his apparent mission to convert the world to his cryptozoological ideas.

Dr Gravel's revelations about Heuvelmans were more bizarre than any of the weekend's mystery animals. Heuvelmans regarded cryptozoology as "more important than oncology", the study

Jean-Jacques Barloy

FLORENT BARRÈRE

Eric Joye
(Organis

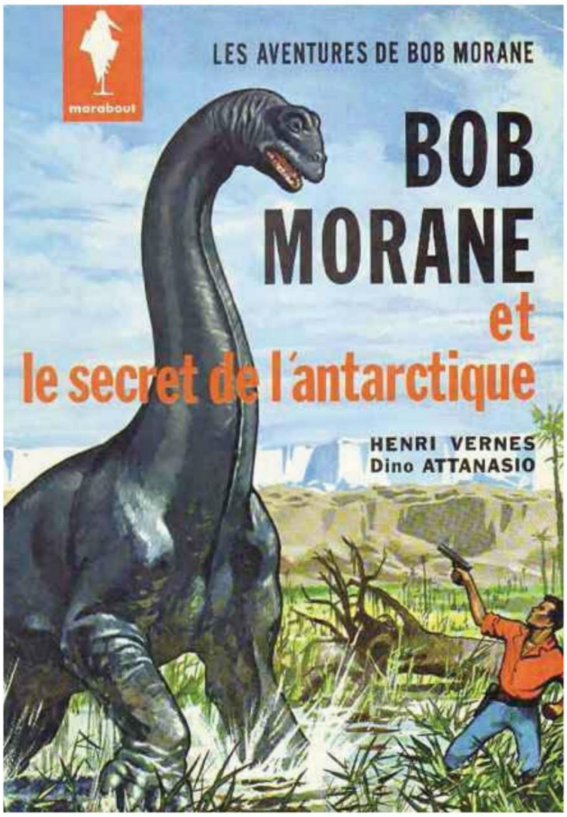
FLORENT BARRÈRE

of cancers. He was disturbingly keen on indoctrinating youth to his crypto-crusade. He sent Tintin's creator Hergé a dossier of cuttings and drawings – made by one of Heuvelmans's several wives, an illustrator – of the yeti. This insinuated its way into Hergé's interpretation of the yeti in *Tintin in Tibet* (**FT281:52–53**). Heuvelmans also used his influence to ensure that best-selling Belgian adolescent paperback thriller series *Bob Morane* (he's a secret agent who saves the world) included a Heuvelmans-quoting sidekick and a civilisation of tool-using yetis who join Morane in fighting the perfidious Chinese Communists.

And another woman who was briefly Mme Heuvelmans – Monique Watteau, *aka* Alica Lindburgh – channelled Heuvelmans's eccentric mission to convert unbelievers to cryptozoology through a series of messianic "*eroto-fantastique*" novels.

There was one other Brit at the Dinant gig – marine biologist Dr Charles Paxton – and we both learnt an important French word that weekend: *teminonage*, or "sightings". With M. Bonet the English teacher translating into French, Dr Paxton told us how he number-crunched data from sea monster accounts from 1758–2000. He concluded that the creatures seen were "closer than you'd get by chance alone", suggesting witnesses under-estimated the distance they were from the animal. He put a 2m (6ft 7in) high model of a "tall black monster" on Windermere, and asked people to describe it. While it was actually 337m (1,100ft) away, most people believed it to be 500m (1,640ft) away.

Children proved "lousy witnesses" in Paxton's Windermere experiment, female witnesses "significantly under-estimated" the upright object's size, while "males slightly over-estimated" its height. This prompted much Gallic giggling and a joke by M. Raynal in French, the only word of which I caught was "*pénis*".


LES AVENTURES DE BOB MORANE
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BOB MORANE et le secret de l'antarctique
HENRI VERNES
Dino ATTANASIO

Dr Paxton has also extrapolated from a curve of post-Linnæan discoveries of marine animals over 2m in length that there remain quite a few whales yet to be discovered. There are only two known marine reptiles "above 2m": the leatherback turtle and the estuarine crocodile (sea snakes aren't quite long enough to make the grade). This, concludes Dr Paxton, makes it "statistically unlikely" that any as yet undiscovered sea monsters out there will turn out to be plesiosaurs or other reptiles.

Self-confessed "Belgian bigfooter" Eric Joye is the director of Apebar Absi, the group that organises the *colloque* – although Eric pretty much *is* Apebar Absi. Eric ended the *colloque* with his account of his latest trip to British Columbia in search of the elusive hominid. He had already treated attendees to his impressions of sasquatch grunts, screams and calls over dinner. He described the chilling experience of hearing a sasquatch call, imitating it – and getting a reply! Although coyotes are also good mimics, and Eric once got a coyote yelp in response to his impressions, the sasquatch call was "recognisably not a coyote".

The French-speaking crypto-scene struck me as being more rigorous in its researches than its English-language equivalent, which is too often reliant on enthusiasm alone. At the Dinant crypto-gig, cryptozoology was seen as a discipline, not a hobby, with consideration given to "investigative tools" and "the rules of evidence". And Francophone cryptozoologists understood that you also have to write up your findings in a way that engages the reader. It's a pity so much Francophone crypto-literature, much of it of an intimidatingly high standard, never crosses the language barrier.

And if you're not already tempted to make the trip to Belgium for next year's *colloque*, then Apebar Absi's director promises conference-goers Dinant's famous *koek* biscuits – traditionally cut in the shapes of animals, churches and so on – custom-made in the form of sasquatch footprints. **FT**

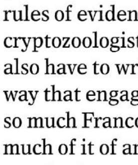
TOP LEFT: Jean-Jacques Barloy spoke on 'Audubon's mysterious birds".

TOP LEFT: Eric Joye's group Apebar Absi organises the annual *colloque*.

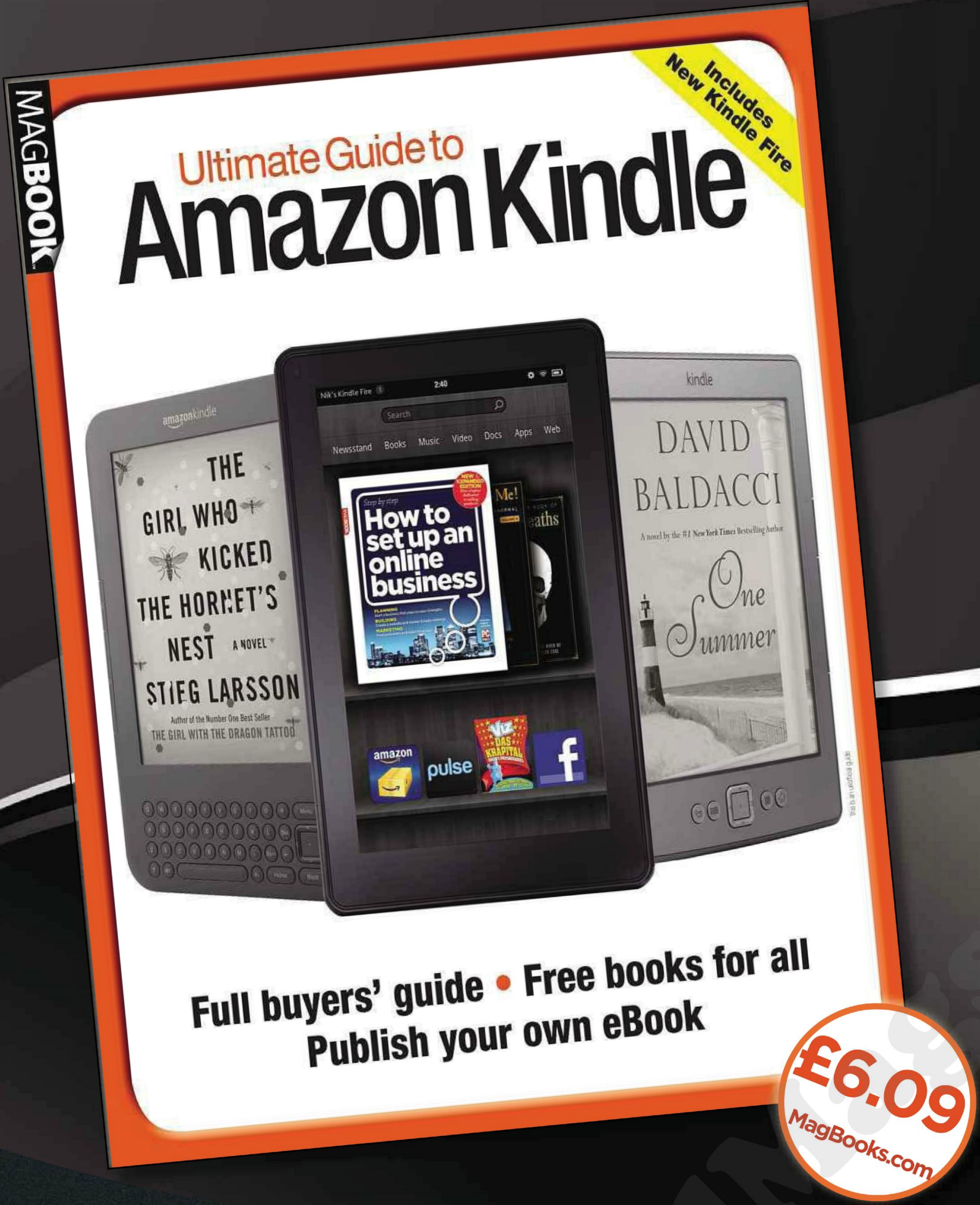
ABOVE: The Bob Morane adventures present crypto-zoological topics in a popular medium.

You can find a five-minute video of this year's event at http://dai.ly/lnrbZM (www.dailymotion.com).

"Cryptozoologia", Apebar Absi's website, is at www.cryptozoologia.eu, where there are proceedings from its conferences as (paid-for) downloads. The 12th colloque crytozoologie is in Dinant in April 2013.



Freelance journalist **MATT SALUSBURY** (http://mattsalusbury.blogspot.com) is a regular *FT* contributor and an activist with the National Union of Journalists. His book *Pygmy Elephants* will be published by CFZ Press this year.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I SAY, OLD SPORTS

For all the hype surrounding London 2012, the original Greek Games were undeniably much more fun, what with naked wrestling, lethal trumpet contests, multiple chariot pile-ups and boxers who turned into wolves. **BARRY BALDWIN** celebrates the outrageous oddities and farcical fatalities of the ancient Olympics.

“Of all the evils afflicting Greece, none is worse than the tribe of athletes” (Euripides)[1]

Bet Baron de Coubertin, founder of the modern Olympics, never quoted this. Nor Plato’s assessment of athletes as “unnatural, overdeveloped, unsophisticated louts” – anticipating certain English Premier League players? Nor the great doctor Galen’s frequent gibes at their muscle-bound frames and spendthrift ways. Galen knew whereof he spoke. One of his jobs had been patching up wounded Roman gladiators.

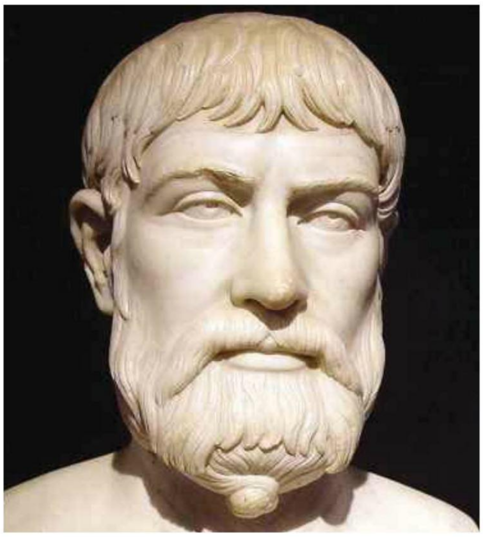
The Olympic Games were founded on the site of the stinking Augean stables, cleansed by ace plumber Hercules’s nifty river diversion.

A logical topology.[2] Few topics have generated more bullshit, dutifully spewed out every four years by modern innocents, than the so-called ‘Olympic Spirit’, sport for its own sake, sport as a bringer-together of nations, blah-blah-blah.

That’s mainly modern invention. True, there are a few ancient intimations. Lucian commends those who compete for laurels rather than gold. Roman Titus Domitius likewise plays down his many victories, thus “reaching out a hand across the centuries to Mr Avery Brundage”.[3]

De Coubertin apotheosised these untypical sentiments: “The Important thing is not the triumph but the struggle; the essential thing is not to have triumphed but to have fought well.”

THE OLYMPIC GAMES WERE FOUNDED ON THE SITE OF THE STINKING AUGEAN STABLES



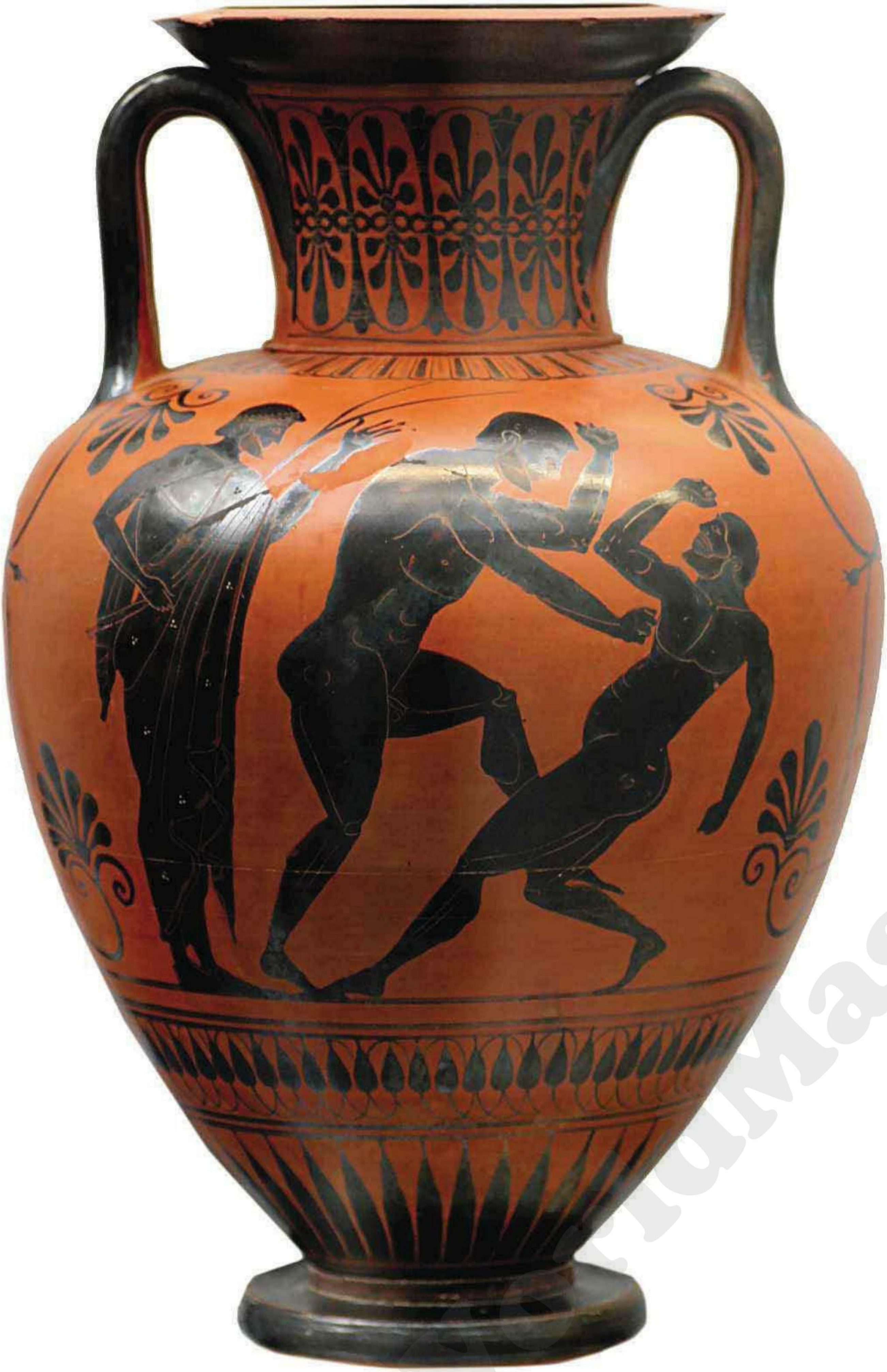
Twaddle reproduced by the likes of Gardiner: “Indeed, the Olympic crown is a lesson in sportsmanship for all time, reminding us that the true sportsman contends not for the value of the prize but for the honour of victory and not for his own honour only but for that of his country, his state, his school, his side.”

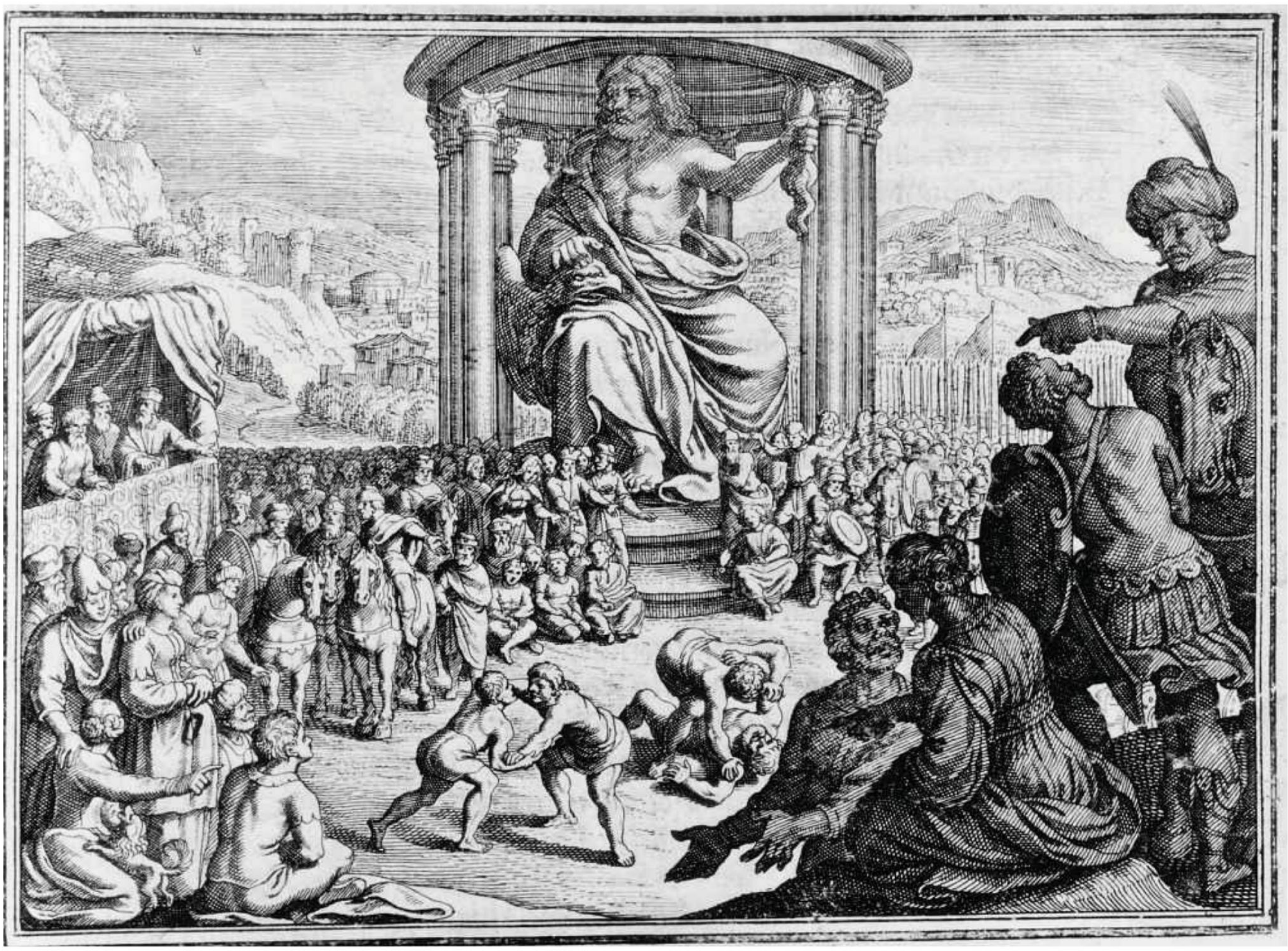
Gardiner belonged to the generation of Henry Newbolt’s *Vitai Lampada*:

“There’s a breathless hush in the Close tonight,
Ten to make and the match to win,
A bumping pitch and a blinding light,
An hour to play and the last man in.
And it’s not for the sake of a ribboned coat,
Or the selfish hope of a season’s fame,
But his Captain’s hand on his shoulder smote:
“Play up! Play up! And play the game!”[4]

This persiflage draws heavily on Pindar, the first sports reporter, “the prize wind-bag of all ages” (Ezra Pound). It overlooks the fact that all his odes typically (Greeks were not interested in who came second or third) celebrated winners and winning, and were usually commissioned by well-heeled patrons. In the case of chariot racing, owner not

LEFT: Pindar, the first sports reporter, wrote odes celebrating Olympic winners. **OPPOSITE:** Naked boxers on a Greek vase.





GETTY IMAGES / HULTON ARCHIVE

ABOVE: A German engraving of the mid-18th century shows crowds watching a wrestling match during the ancient Olympic Games, beneath a statue of Zeus.

driver garnered the plaudits – embryonic commercialism.

When razing Thebes, Alexander the Great spared one building: Pindar's house. Would modern warlords equally honour David Coleman's abode?

Winning was everything. A series of epigrams in the *Greek Anthology* ridicules losers, especially slow runners and one gallant soul who came last in all his five events; no shortage of ancient Eddie the Eagles. One ancient joke deserves a prize for tastelessness. On seeing a runner being crucified, an onlooker gibed, "At last he really flies." This nasty strain of classical humour would have had a field day with the Paralympics.

At least there were no bidding wars, except between cities where top athletes were often offered bribes to fake their registrations. Elis was the permanent Olympic host. We still give Greeks pride of place in the opening parade. Why not keep the Games there? Not just sentiment. Influx of visitors would be a handy stimulus package, in euros or drachmæ.

No bringing-together of nations. Only Greek competitors were allowed. And, when this rule was relaxed in Roman times, it let in the likes of King Mithridates, who poisoned the charioteer who'd beaten him, and Nero, who attempted to race a 10-horse chariot, fell out, but was awarded first prize by the tactful judges, thus earning their country a 10-year tax holiday – something else for their cash-strapped successors to contemplate.

SEIZE YOUR OPPONENT BY THE BOLLOCKS AND SQUEEZE THEM UNTIL HE HOWLS

A more interesting, though elusive, outsider is Varazdat, King of Armenia (AD 374–78), the last recorded Olympic winner.[5] For boxing. Step Forward, scions of the House of Windsor.

You might say the Olympics briefly united the fractious Greeks. One way in which Jewish-born Roman citizen St Paul displayed his Hellenic culture was via sporting metaphors such as Fight the Good Fight, Run the Straight Race (cf. Tom Lehrer's wince-inducing parody, "sliding down the razor-blade of life").

No bridging of the gender-gap, either. Pausanias says any married or mature woman trying to enter Olympia was hurled from the rocks. Elsewhere, he confirms that virgins were admitted – how many will thus qualify in London this year?

De Coubertin staunchly upheld this sexism, keeping women out of his 1896 revival games, proclaiming they were only fit "to crown the male victors with laurels".

He'd have made a good Greek – or Saudi Arabian.

NAKED TALENT

An obvious way of testing competitors' sexual credentials was naked inspection – one reason for Greek athletic nudity. The other came about accidentally. In one account, a runner's shorts came off, he went on to win, thus encouraging others to follow (birthday) suit. Another claims a runner fatally tripped over his drooping shorts, thereby provoking an official ban on their wearing.

Naked athletes? Paparazzi and tabloid heaven! Pausanias says running naked improved performance. But, are one's dangly bits really that much more aerodynamic?

Apart from a voyeur's delight, nudity enlivened the combat sports. There are vase paintings showing pugilists kneeing or being kneed in the goolies. A wrestlers' training manual recommends you seize your opponent by the bollocks and squeeze them until he howls – he had to be on the ball.

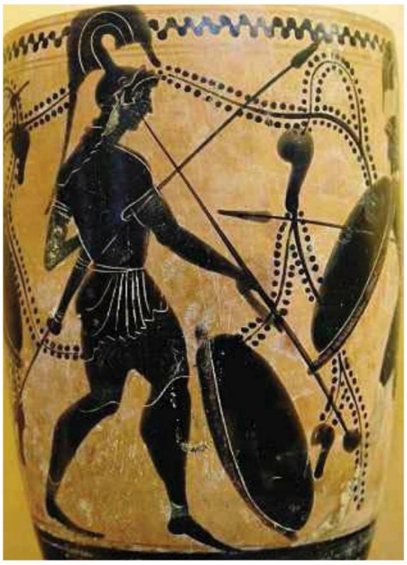
Quite a lot of genital lore in these areas.[6] Some competitors tied strings around their foreskins to improve performance in running or javelin throwing – most prepuce-essing. Iccus, author of the earliest training manual, advocated sexual abstinence, about which connection with sporting prowess there is many a modern myth. I prefer English cricket captain Ingleby-Mackenzie's approach on night curfews for his players: I don't care as long as they're in bed by breakfast.

Another ancient coach developed techniques to curb erections and wet dreams. Others were accused of sexually abusing their charges – sadly modern. You also have to wonder what was going on to provoke the detailed second-century BC Macedonian decree fining those who disrobed without the leader's permission.

OLYMPIC MYTHCONCEPTIONS

There was no ancient Marathon race. Its invention (partly influenced by Browning's 1879 poem) honoured Philippides/Pheidippides (described as a professional long-distance runner) who (the story grew taller from Herodotus to Plutarch to Lucian) ran from Athens to Sparta seeking military aid, then to Marathon, then back to announce victory before suitably dropping dead (*"Rejoice, we conquer!" Like wine through clay, Joy in his blood bursting his heart, – the bliss!* – Browning).

Nor was a flaming torch carried around Greece to prelude the games. That was Carl Diem's invention for the 1936 Berlin Olympics, designed to persuade Hitler that his Aryans were worthy inheritors of Greek ideals and values.[7] There was a Classical pedigree of sorts in the popular urban torch races: Plato's *Republic* begins with Socrates itching to see a nocturnal one on horseback.



The Nazis also faked the Five Rings motif, carving them on to stone at Delphi in the manner of an ancient inscription, thereby fooling many modern scholars who published it as genuine.

The inaugural Olympics (776 BC) would not have attracted a TV rights bidding war, consisting as it did of a single event – the footrace or dash. The event retained a sentimental prestige, the winner being often used by historians as a chronological marker. No times, of course, could be recorded. And in the absence of starting-pistols, false starts were frequent, the culprits being whipped by the judges – the IOC should restore that tradition.

TRAINING AND TRUMPETS

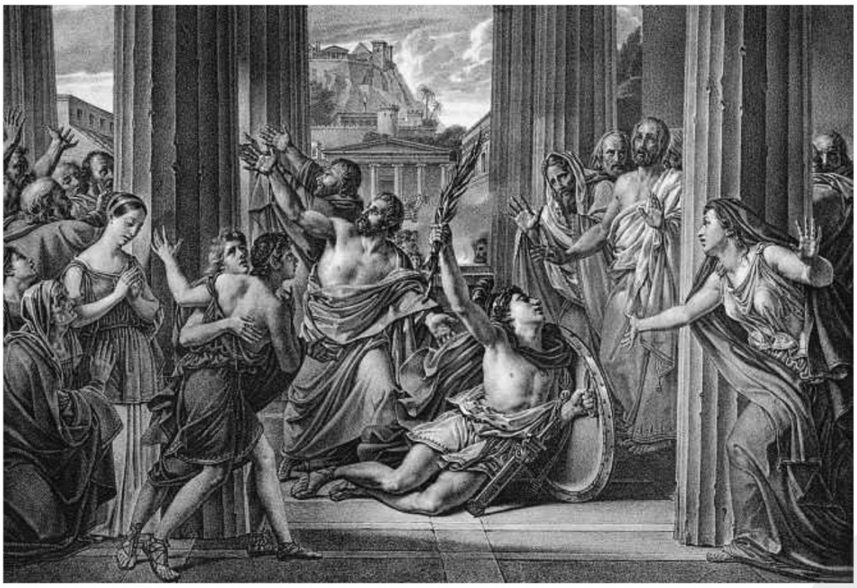
"Sprints have killed many a man" (Galen). As have longer races. Ladas (a tough Spartan) dropped dead immediately after winning his. Some fleet-foots may have overdone it. One, Polymestor, could run faster than a hare. Another was said to outpace horses. How long could they keep this up?

New events were rapidly added in the first 200 years, though none so preposterous as some modern ones (volleyball!). After that, the programme ossified. One novelty, the mule-cart race, was quickly abandoned: "too modern", Pausanias observed, while the poet Simonides refused to pen a winner's victory ode on "so trivial an affair" – at least until his fee was upped.

There's obvious correlation between many events and Greek military training requirements. Apart from team events, the most notable absences are the high jump and anything aquatic, despite their proverb "He who cannot swim is a fool". At least they were spared the horrors of glassily-smiling synchronised swimmers. Nor did they face the question: "Did you hear about the Irish water polo team? All their horses drowned".

Alongside the men, boys competed in their own programme. Pausanias concentrates on their boxing. Glaukos showed early promise by using his fist as a hammer when replacing a ploughshare, and went on to Olympic glory. Damiskos won at the age of 12 – considerably younger than the goal-scoring debuts of Wayne Rooney and James Milner.

There were also side competitions in literature and music; was Elis infested by ancient Melvyn Braggs? Modern athletes are fond of blowing their own trumpets. The most famous winner (10 successive prizes) on this instrument was Herodorus of Megara, only 5ft 3in (1.6m) tall, who (Athenæus says) daily ingested 6lb (2.7kg) of bread, 20lb (9kg) of meat, and two pitchers of wine, this diet enabling him to blow two trumpets at once at tremendous



GETTY IMAGES / HULTON ARCHIVE / RICHGITZ

GETTY IMAGES / HULTON ARCHIVE / KEYSTONE

TOP: A Greek salpinx (trumpet) player. Competitive trumpet-playing was a musical component of the ancient games – and sometimes a fatal one.
ABOVE LEFT: Philippides/Pheidippides collapses and dies on his return to Athens, after running from Marathon with news of the Greek victory over Persia.
ABOVE RIGHT: Another, more modern, myth is that of the Olympic torch; it was actually introduced by the Nazis at the Berlin games of 1936.

volume.

Equally loud but emphatically less successful was Harmonides, who in his first competition blew so loud that he dropped dead on the stage – compare the alleged effects of his ear-splitting cornet on Buddy Bolden.

Athens 2004 produced a predictable harvest of scandals and mishaps. Many Greeks failed drug tests. Lacking steroids, their ancient counterparts bulked up on food. Famous wrestler Milo's daily intake was 20lb (9kg) each of bread and meat washed down by three pitchers of wine, supplemented by his special diet fad of the gizzard stones of roosters. Milo trained by daily lifting an ox from calfdom to adulthood, before killing and eating it in one day.

Milo's strength (he carried and erected his own bronze Olympic statue) was also his undoing. Coming upon a split tree, he pulled the two sides apart, only for them to spring back, trap his hands, and hold him there until a pack of wolves arrived and devoured him.

Any such yarns about Mick McManus?

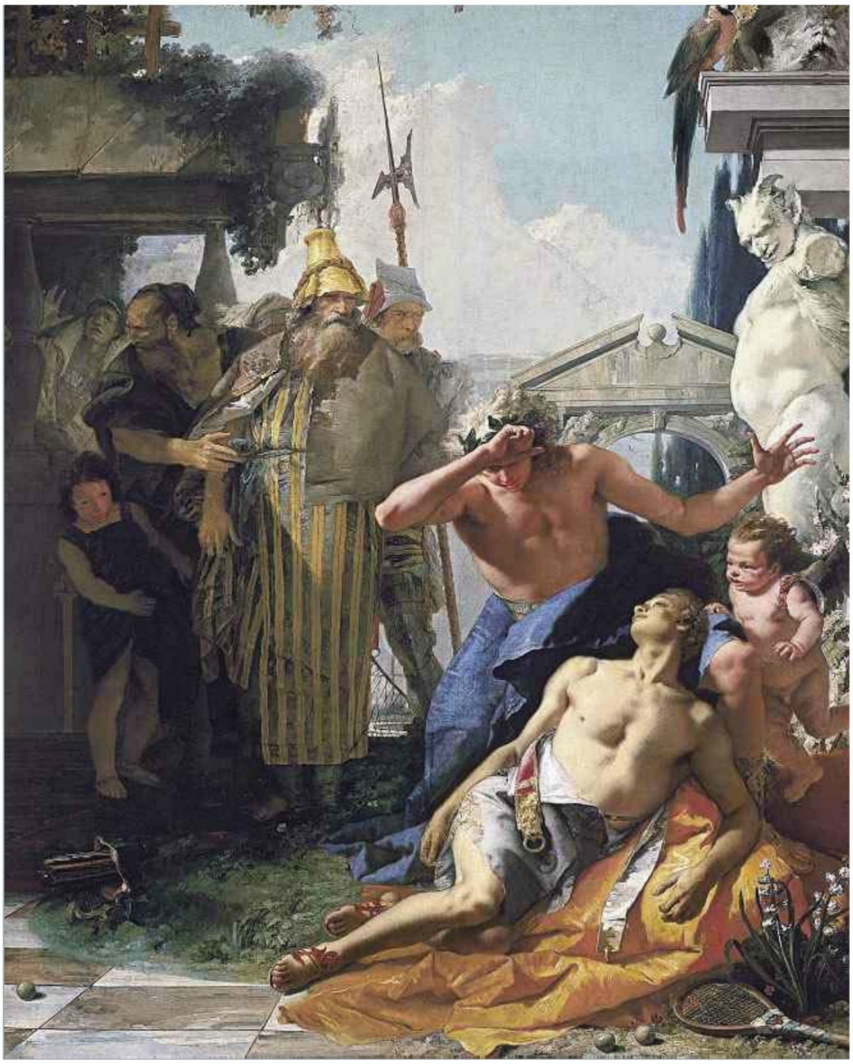
Pausanias reports the ultimate lupine story of boxer Damarchos who turned into a wolf after Olympic victory, reverting back nine years later.

THE MOST DANGEROUS GAMES

Death and injuries were everywhere, on and off the arena, packed into games that lasted only five days, a good deal of which was taken up by religious rites and pageantries. The proverbially wise Spartan Chilo died at the moment of his son's boxing victory. When Diagoras's (himself a former boxing champion) three sons all scored wins on the same day, he likewise expired on the spot, while two victorious pentathletes dropped dead when being crowned.

A scholiast on Pindar states, "Many athletes were killed in the stadium." Probably in or after their endeavours rather than by hooligans, albeit crowds were famously raucous and violent.

No event was immune. Chariot-racing naturally had spectacular pile-ups; many no doubt came hoping to see these. In one, 39 of 40 crashed – sounds like the Grand National. Pausanias says most smashes were due to the fear mysteriously generated in steeds by a track mound called 'Horse Scarer' – shades of Beecher's Brook.



ABOVE: Any Olympic event could end in injury or death. Even the discus posed its own risks, as shown in the myth of the beautiful youth Hyacinthus, taken out when a jealous Zephyrus misdirected Apollo's throw.

Equitation, by the way, according to Hippocrates and Galen, caused arthritis, sciatica, ruptures, and sexual impotence – watch it, Frankie Dettori.

Mythographers report Apollo killed his boyfriend Hyacinthus with a misdirected discus throw. You might think a god would have had better aim. But consider deified David Beckham's famous penalty fiasco.

In Olympic discus-throwing, Phocus was hit by half-brother Peleus, Acrisius by grandson Perseus, Thermius by brother Oxylus – an awful lot of slipped discs.

When one competitor's javelin fatally impaled a rival, Pericles and philosopher Protagoras spent the entire day debating where to fix the blame: javelin? thrower? judges? Alas, we don't know their verdict.

"Jumping has injured many" (Galen). We have only two long-jump records, both impossible unless it was something like a triple leap. Phayllus cleared 55ft (17m), Chionis 52ft (16m). Unsurprisingly, both broke their legs on landing.

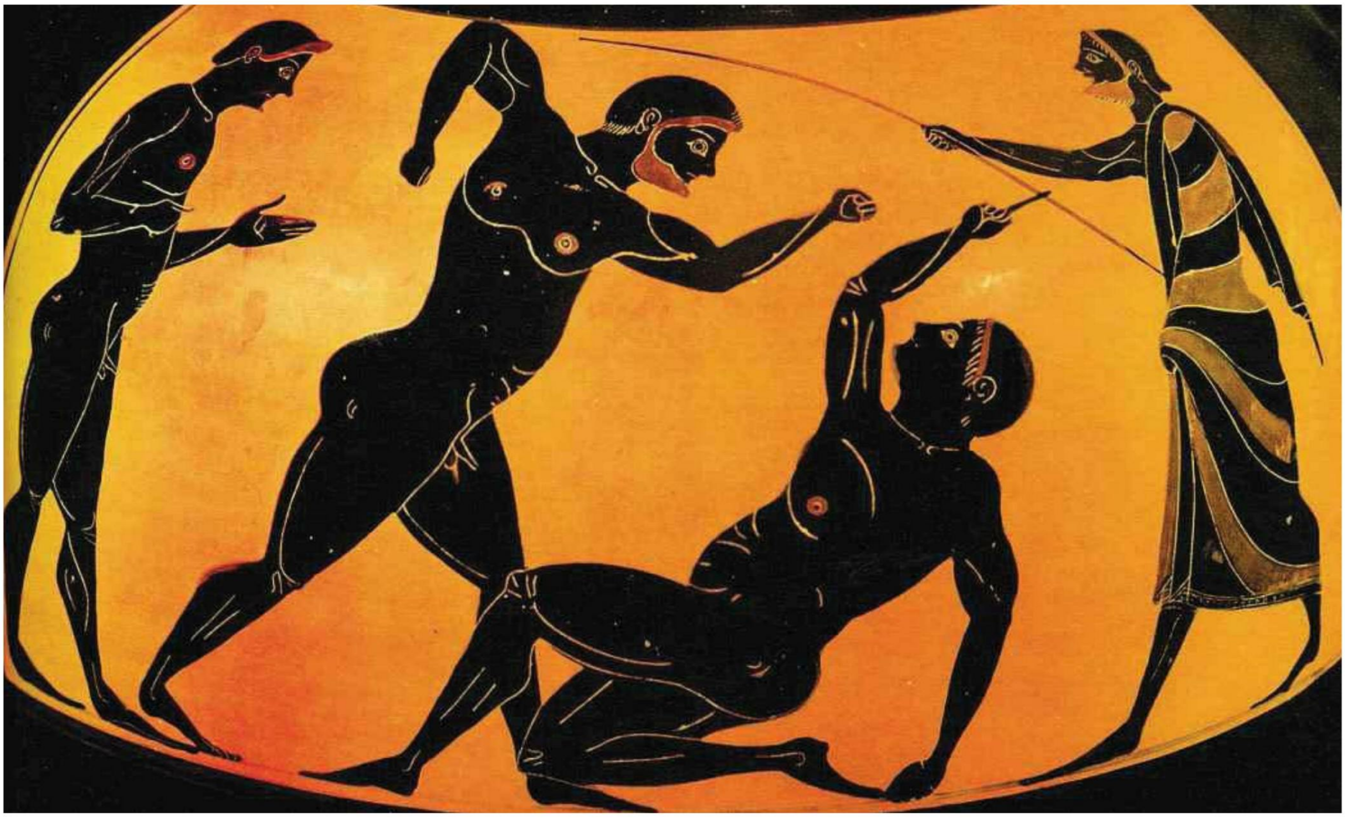
You'd expect the worst from the three combat sports: boxing, wrestling, and the pancration (the Greek version of 'extreme sports', everything but biting and eye-gouging being allowed). No ring, no time limits, no weight classifications – and no text mentions shaking hands before or after. Perhaps surprising that only eight deaths are recorded: four boxing, two wrestling, two pancration.[8]

"Wrestlers are lamed, bruised, altogether disabled" (Galen). The pancration featured the likes of Leontiskos the Sicilian, who won by bending and breaking his opponent's fingers, a technique also used by pancratiast Sosotratos so often that he was nicknamed "Finger Tips".

The most exotic pancration fatality was Arrichion who, just before he was throttled, forced his opponent's surrender by dislocating his ankle, and was posthumously crowned champion. So, too, was Kreugas the boxer, after having his entrails torn out by sharp-nailed Damoxenos, who was disqualified for unsportsman-like conduct – makes Tyson's ear-biting seem tame.

Boxing was the most notorious event, especially after the Romans hotted it up with loaded gloves. Before that, they fought with wrapped hands, not quite bare-knuckled. Flat-handed blows and rabbit punches were legal. No breaks for sponges, towels, or water. Their leather gumshields did not save the teeth of Eurydamas who, wanting to conceal his dislodged gnashers, swallowed them all before winning – his moment of tooth.

It was every pugilist's dream to retire unmarked ('atraumatistos'). Only one managed it: Cleomenes of Alexandria. Muhammed Ali comes to mind, but we – unlike the Greeks – know his mental scars, and all about concussions and long-term effects. Ali's boxer daughter Leila was being very Greek when she told an interviewer: "I'm coming to knock her out, I'm not just looking for a win." One of many *Greek Anthology* epigrams testifies to the



ABOVE: The pancration was a no-holds-barred 'extreme sport' in which everything but biting and eye-gouging was allowed. Surprisingly, it only resulted in two deaths.

profession's results: "I once had a nose, chin, forehead, ears, eyelids; becoming a boxer, I lost them all."

Little wonder Eupolus of Thessaly bribed his opponents to take a dive, the first of many such fixes. One such collaborator may have been Apis, to whom a statue was erected "because he never hurt anyone".

WINNERS AND LOSERS

Still, considering the remedies, death might have seemed preferable to healing. Pliny recommends wild boar or pig dung, best mixed in a drink with vinegar and ash, adding that Nero thus dosed himself to become an ace charioteer – don't think it would sell nowadays as an energy drink.

Boxer-pancratiast Theogenes won around 1,200 prizes on the athletic circuit. He once came a cropper, defeating bitter rival Euthymnos in boxing, but too exhausted to continue with the pancration, thus incurring a heavy fine for defaulting, plus an extra one for boxing just to spite his opponent. After death, Theogenes was worshipped by fellow citizens as a god – supreme fandom – save one jealous fellow who whipped his statue until it fell on and crushed him.

His enemy Euthymnos had achieved local fame by fighting and defeating a black ghost clad in wolfskin which was terrorising the population. Suitably, "he reached the farthest point of age and escaped death and departed from life in a different way," (Pausanias), disappearing (Aelian says) into the river whose resident god happened to be his father. To cap it all, his statues in hometown Locri and Olympia were struck by lightning on the same day.

So was it all for sporting honour and a wreath of laurel or parsley? Not a bit of it.[9] There's no ancient Greek word for 'amateur' ('erasitechnes' in modern). Pindar describes the losers as "shunned at home, they go skulking down the backroads". Winners were regularly honoured with statues (countless examples in Pausanias) and such perks as free dinners for life in the town hall. Examinetos, returning home after winning his race, was escorted by 600 white horses and 300 chariots, with the mayor and councillors personally hauling the victor's. Athenian athletes raked in so much cash that Solon tried to reduce the amounts, deeming it "tasteless to magnify their rewards" – a retrenchment long overdue in EPL salaries.

In AD 393, Emperor Theodosius I banned the Olympic Games as too pagan. In 1896, de Coubertin revived them as representing muscular Christianity at its best. So much for ideologies. **FT**

Author Biography

BARRY BALDWIN is a classicist, journalist and author of mystery fiction. He is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada and Emeritus Professor of Classics at the University of Calgary, best known for his work on early Greek humorists and satirists. He is a regular *FT* columnist.

NOTES

[1] Repertoire of translated primary sources in Stephen Miller: *Arete*, Univ. California, 3rd ed., 2004. Most informative are Lucian's *Anarcharsis* and Pausanias's *Description of Greece*. For the plain facts, *Dragnet*-style, two old standbys: EN Gardiner: *Athletics of the Ancient World*, Oxford, 1930; HA Harris: *Sport in Greece and Rome*, Thames & Hudson, 1972. More wide-ranging modern treatments include M Golden's *Sport and Society in Ancient Greece*, Cambridge Univ., 1998 and David Sansone's *Greek Athletics and the Genesis of Sport*, Univ. California, 1992. Plus, NB Crowther's brobdingnagian bibliographies in *Classical World* 58, 1985, available online.

[2] An excremental origin pursued in Oliver Taplin's *Guardian* review (14 Aug 2004) of Nigel Spivey's *The Ancient Olympics: War Minus the Shooting*.

[3] Harris, *op. cit.* p175, for quotation and more details.

[4] Compare Housman's more rancid *To an Athlete Dying Young*.

[5] Moses of Chorene: *Armenian History*, bk3 ch40.

[6] Expounded in TF Scanlon: *Eros and Greek Athletics*, Oxford, 2003.

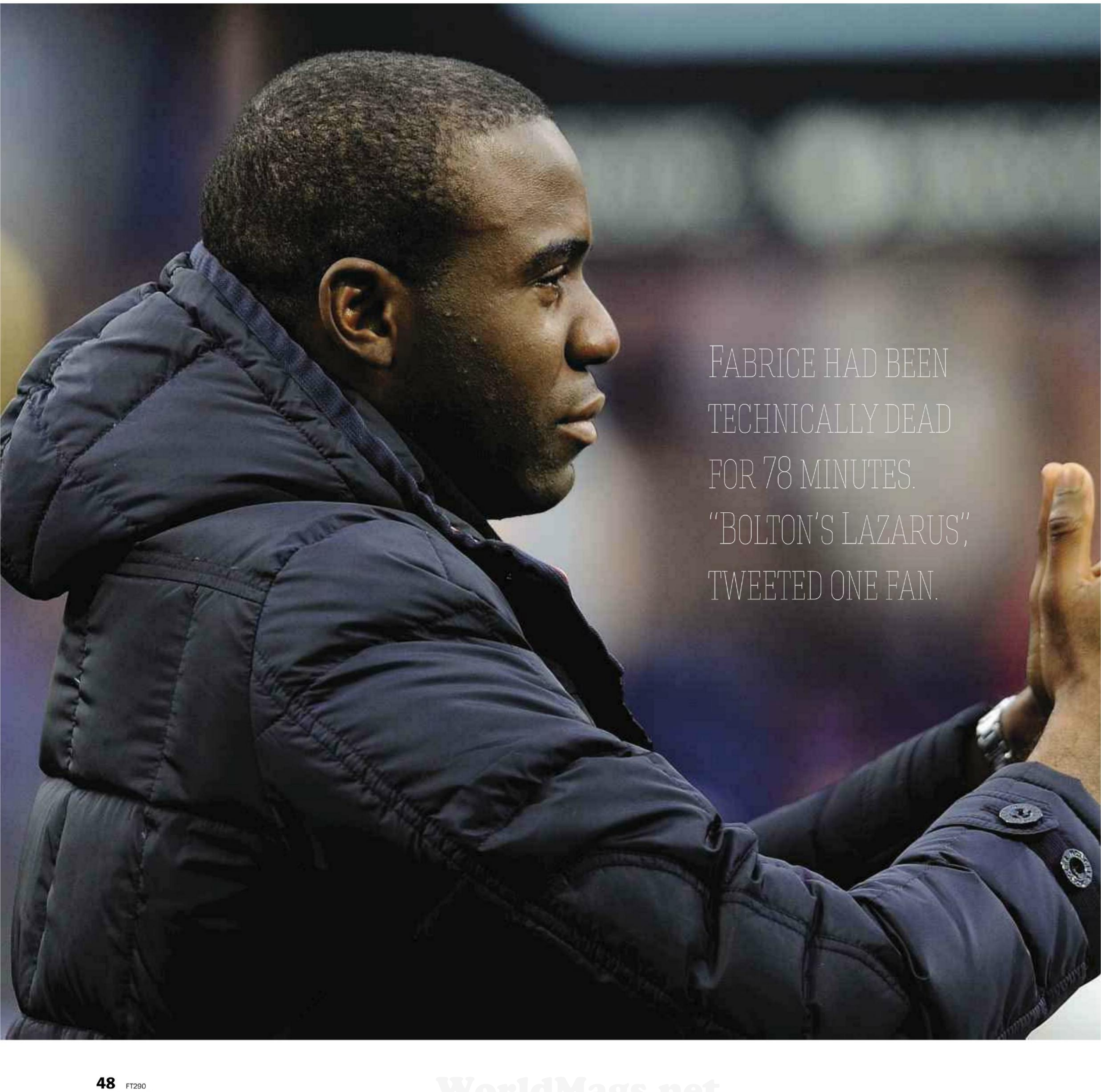
[7] Full details in Peter Jones's *Spectator* column, 2 July 2011.

[8] Comprehensive account in M Poliakoff's *Combat Sports in the Ancient World*, Yale, 1987.

[9] Cogent debunking in DC Young: *The Olympic Myth of Greek Amateur Athletics*, Ares Press, Chicago, 1984.

KNOCKIN' ON HEAVEN'S DOOR, PART ONE:
THE LAZARUS SYNDROME

When footballer Fabrice Muamba collapsed on the pitch and his heart stopped for a full 78 minutes, his subsequent recovery was hailed as a miracle – not least by Muamba himself – but his experience was far from unique. **TED HARRISON** considers a number of recent cases in which being pronounced dead is not the end of the story.



FABRICE HAD BEEN TECHNICALLY DEAD FOR 78 MINUTES. "BOLTON'S LAZARUS", TWEETED ONE FAN.

GETTY IMAGES / MICHAEL REGAN

But he stinks, protested his sister; he's been dead four days. The body of Lazarus was sealed in its tomb by the time Jesus arrived on the scene in Bethany. In the Bible's shortest verse (John 11:35), it is recorded that on hearing the news of the death of his friend, "Jesus wept."

In the most famous case of raising the dead, Jesus then called Lazarus forth from his grave and he appeared, like a horror-movie mummy, wrapped in his grave clothes. He was given food and drink and lived for many more years, becoming, it is said, a bishop in the early Church.

The young man at the centre of the story has lent his name to science, literature and the arts. The Lazarus taxon refers to organisms that re-emerge in the fossil record after a period of having been thought to be extinct. Lazarus syndrome (or Lazarus phenomenon) is the medical term for any case of spontaneous resuscitation after the heart has stopped beating. There is even a Liverpool band called Lazarus Syndrome, which describes its music as "Melodic Death Metal".

Indeed, anyone who comes back to life after apparently dying quickly attracts the Lazarus label. Fabrice Muamba collapsed 41 minutes into the first half of Bolton Wanderers' game with Tottenham Hotspur on 17 March 2012 and his heart stopped beating (see **FT289:11**). Doctors and paramedics used Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) techniques to keep his blood circulating in order to allow oxygen to reach his brain. When eventually an electric shock from a defibrillator restarted his heart, Fabrice had been technically dead for 78 minutes. "Bolton's Lazarus", tweeted one fan.

Fabrice's father also invoked the Biblical figure, as he later told the *Sun* newspaper:

"I was obviously very concerned that Fabrice would not make it but our faith is very strong and I really believed God would answer my prayer to save him… I said to God, 'You are the one who resurrected Lazarus from the dead. Now in this moment glorify yourself.'" (*Sun, 22 April 2012*)

While it is rare for anyone to survive that long with no spontaneous heart beat and return to tell the tale, Fabrice does not hold the record.

BACK FROM THE DEAD

In December 2010, Arun Bhasin from east London was 'dead' for three and a half hours after he was rushed to Croydon University Hospital having been found lying unconscious in temperatures of –10°C (14°F). When he arrived at the hospital, the 53-year-old engineer had no pulse or heartbeat. He received 20,000 heart compressions from a revolutionary new cardiac support machine, called a Zoll AutoPulse pump, before his pulse returned. Dr Nigel Raghunath, lead consultant in Accident and Emergency care, who treated Mr Bhasin, said he had never seen such a remarkable case in his 15 years in A&E.[1] (*D.Mail, 14 Jan 2011*)

In April 2011, a 65-year-old Malaysian man astounded his family when he came back to life having been declared dead by doctors over two hours earlier. The family had already begun to make funeral arrangements for Ng Swee Hock, and his wife and son were on their way to the police station to report the circumstances of his death when they received a call from the hospital to say that his heart had started beating again.

Ng had collapsed after a quarrel with his brother and was rushed to Seberang Jaya Hospital. The medical teams there performed cardiac pulmonary resuscitation, but after an hour pronounced him dead. When it was noticed that he suddenly began to breathe again after two and a half hours, he was immediately put on a respirator.

Later, the hospital director Dr Sukumar Mahesan said an independent inquiry had found Ng's case to be consistent with the 'Lazarus Phenomenon'. (*Star (Malaysia), 11 April 2011*)

In June 2009 ,the *Daily Telegraph* reported the case of a 23-year-old man who was pronounced dead by doctors but came back to life 30 minutes later (for this and other cases, see **FT262:10–11**). Michael Wilkinson (below), a roofer from Preston, was taken to hospital in February that year when his mother found him collapsed in bed. Doctors at the Royal Preston Hospital failed to revive Wilkinson and he was pronounced dead. But half an hour later, his pulse returned and he was transferred to the intensive care unit.

MEN SYNDICATION

Wilkinson, however, died two days later, and a post mortem examination found an undiagnosed heart condition. His mother, Susan Horrigan, 44, said at the time: "It was as if he had been taken away from me, then given back only to be taken away again."

The *Telegraph* reported the Royal Preston Hospital's A&E consultant John Whittaker as saying that Michael's pulse restarting was probably due to the drugs he had been given.

"When we pronounce anyone dead, that is not a small thing, you make absolutely certain. The decision to pronounce him dead was because we had worked on him for 15 minutes and come to the end of what we could do… There is a phenomenon known as Lazarus Syndrome. It is incredibly rare – I've been a doctor 27 years and have seen it once. There have only been 38 cases of this ever in the world." (*D.Telegraph, 11 June 2009)*

I NEED A MIRACLE

In June 2011, consultant physician Dr Sean Thomas George told a Medical Conference in Brisbane that almost three years earlier he had been dead for 85 minutes, but came back to life after his wife "prayed a simple prayer".

He described how, on 24 October 2008, he had died from a heart attack and colleagues had battled for almost 55 minutes to revive him. He received over 4,000 chest compressions and 13 electrical shocks, but neither his heart nor lungs responded. After 70 minutes he was pronounced dead. His wife, who had been called, arrived 10 minutes too late.

"Being a doctor herself, she knew that medical science had proved that if the blood supply to the brain was cut off for over three minutes the brain would begin to die, and in 20 minutes the brain would be completely dead," Dr George said.

However she held her husband's hand and prayed, "I need a miracle."

"As soon as she said this, it was as though someone had breathed life into me again and my heartbeat came back," Dr George said.

Several days later, after emergency surgery to unblock an artery, Dr George says he was fully conscious with his memory and brain fully functional. Three months later, he was back at work, reported the Christian news agency Assistnews.net.

"The lesson I learned is that eternity is only a breath away. I don't think there are any documented cases of patients who were clinically dead for so long and came back to life with their memory perfectly intact and neurologically no deficits at all. This is something that only God can do, because medically it is impossible."

Assistnews has also reported another claim of someone coming back to life after prayer.

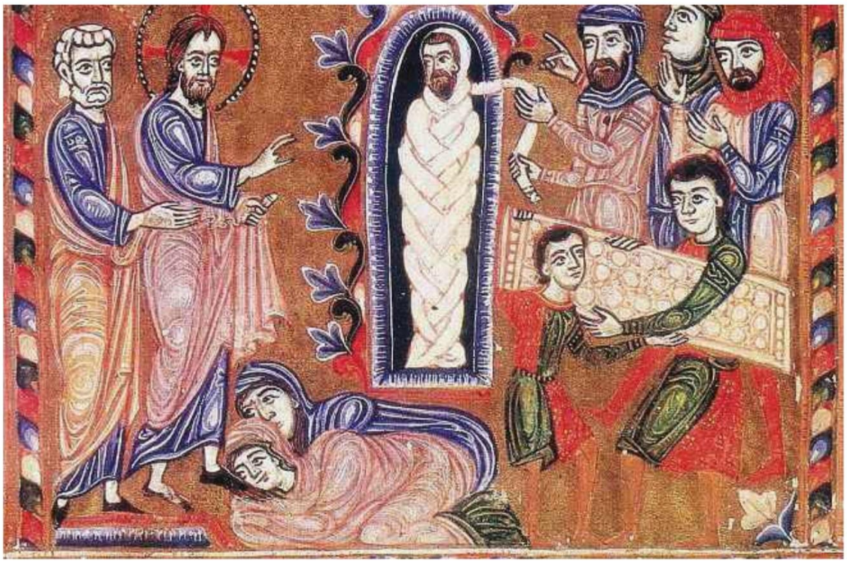
In 1985, three-year-old Tim Yattara from Mali was on a mortuary slab covered by a white sheet when he came back to life having been pronounced dead from yellow fever.

An astonished doctor working in the hospital morgue heard "a little sound" and ran outside "shouting loudly" to the boy's relatives that he was alive. Only five minutes earlier, Tim's mother had been praying over her son's dead body.

She later recalled that she had prayed, "Lord, if only my child comes back from death, I will dedicate him to you and he will become your servant."

Today, at the age of 30, Tim has completed a course of study at a Bible College Hall in Nottinghamshire. Recalling his childhood, he described how when his illness struck he lost his appetite and hair. "I went to several hospitals in the region, but sadly without any solution because the strain of yellow fever at that time was new, with no suitable medicine."

MIRRORPIX



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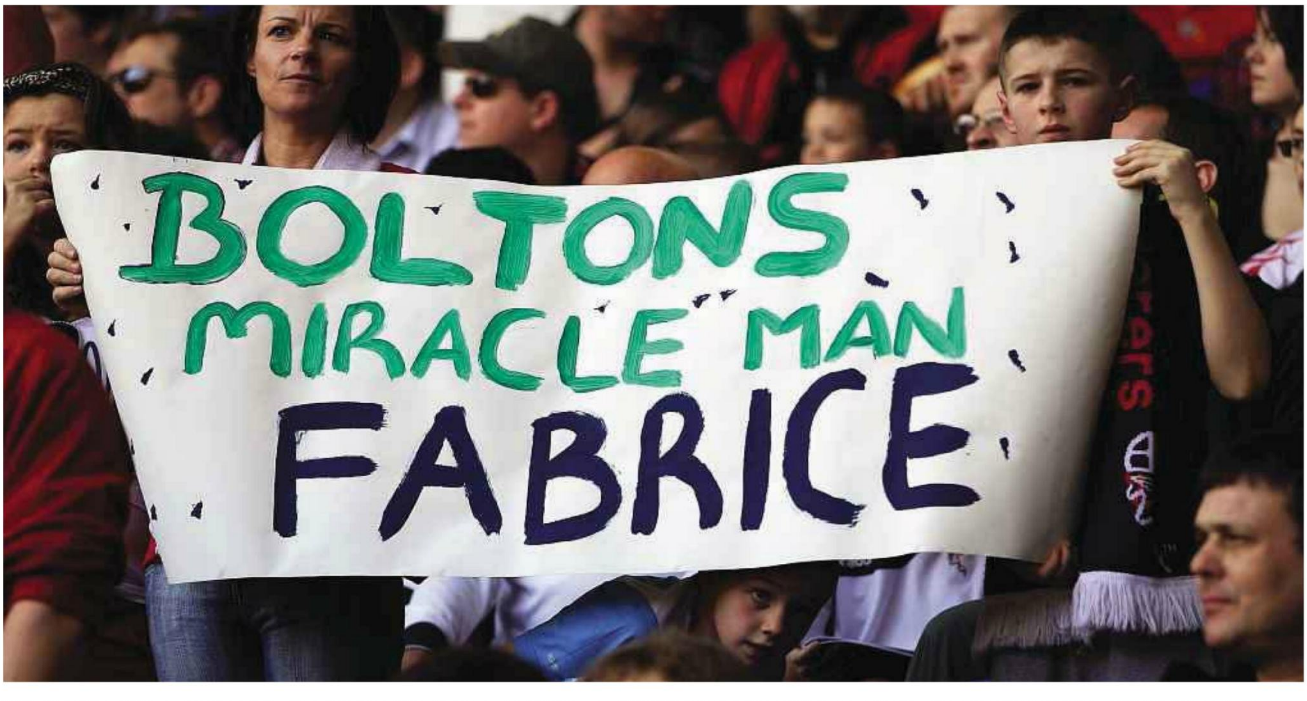

GETTY IMAGES / MICHAEL STEELE

TOP: Arun Bhasin from east London, who was 'dead' for three and a half hours. **CENTRE:** The raising of Lazarus, after an Armenian Evangelistary of the 14th century. Lazarus's sisters are seen at Jesus's feet. **BOTTOM:** Bolton fans were quick to proclaim Fabrice Muamba a 'Miracle Man' following his recovery.

ABOVE LEFT: The unnamed 45-year-old Colombian woman who was declared clinically dead, looking very much alive in this TV news video shot after her recovery.
ABOVE RIGHT: Dr Sean George, who put his return from death down to an intervention from God after his wife prayed for a miracle.

He was eventually admitted to a hospital in Timbuktu City. Tim said the doctors warned his parents he was going to die from the lack of any effective cure and, eventually, he did. After his death had been confirmed, his relatives surrounded the mortuary for half a day waiting for his father to arrive. "While they waited, my mother went with faith to the mortuary, with tears in her eyes, believing that God would do something," explained Tim.

Then the doctor delivered the amazing news, and "everyone waiting outside, including my mother, entered the mortuary and saw that I was alive!".

NOT DEAD, BUT NEARLY BURIED...

In February 2010, AFP reported that funeral home workers in the Colombian city of Cali were amazed when a 45-year-old woman, who was being prepared for burial, suddenly started breathing and moving. Local reports said the woman had been declared clinically dead, having been hospitalised in serious condition with a neurological condition a day earlier.

"The instruments the patient was connected to gave no blood pressure or heart rate readings," said Dr Miguel Angel Saavedra. Medical staff signed the woman's death certificate and her body was transferred to a funeral home.

"When they were going to apply formaldehyde, the patient began to breathe again and make movements," Dr Saavedra told a local news station. The unnamed woman was readmitted to hospital in a coma. (*AFP, 16 Feb 2010*)

Another case of a body appearing to return to life when all hope had been abandoned was that of 61-year-old Judith Johnson of Georgetown, Delaware. In May 2007, she suffered a cardiac arrest 45 minutes after arriving at hospital following a heart attack which she had thought was a bad case of indigestion. When the medical team could detect no pulse, she was declared dead. Later, having been taken to the morgue, it was noticed that her "corpse" was still breathing. (*Fox News, 7 Oct 2008*)

MIRACLES AND MEDICINE

A medical report on Lazarus Syndrome published by the journal *Anesthesia & Analgesia* in 2000 identified 24 cases of return of spontaneous circulation (ROSC) following failed resuscitation. "Of these cases, at least eight patients have survived neurologically intact".

The report suggested that cases of Lazarus Syndrome may be more common than supposed and that doctors are perhaps reluctant to report them for fear of being accused of exaggeration or negligence, or even "the physician's disbelief of his or her own observations".

Several explanations for the phenomenon of Lazarus Syndrome were explored in the report. One suggestion was that the heart might start following a delay in a previously administered dose of adrenaline reaching it. Another explanation involved a gradual intracellular shift of potassium after previously administered bicarbonate.

While the delayed effect of drugs administered during resuscitation might be an explanation for Lazarus Syndrome in a hospital setting – as with Michael Wilkinson – it doesn't explain every report of the dead coming back to life.

Outside the hospital, a misdiagnosis of death might be a more likely explanation, probably due to a pulse being too faint for an untrained person to detect.

One explanation suggested to explain how life might appear to return spontaneously after a prolonged and apparently unsuccessful resuscitation attempt involves a side effect, not of drugs, but of the resuscitation process itself.

"Rapid manual ventilation without adequate time for exhalation can lead to dynamic hyperinflation of lungs," reported a paper in the *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine.*[2]

This can lead to "gas trapping and an increase in the end-expiratory pressure (called auto-PEEP) leading to delayed venous return, low cardiac output and even cardiac arrest in patients with obstructive airways disease". Apparent death from this cause might result in a return of the signs of life once mechanical ventilation ceases, and some doctors therefore suggest resuscitation techniques should be paused for short periods from time to time and that a body should be carefully monitored for at least 10 minutes after death.

"Dynamic hyperinflation can theoretically happen in any situation where rapid manual ventilation is carried out. Even though auto-PEEP due to dynamic hyperinflation seems most plausible and has some evidence in patients with obstructive airways disease, this alone would not explain all cases of delayed ROSC."

Whenever someone appears to return to life after death, claims of the miraculous quite understandably follow. It is a time when sorrow turns to joy and relief – except in the unfortunate case of the 6th-century monk Oran. He was, according to one version of the legend, exhumed a day after his burial on the island of Iona and found to be alive. He declared that he had seen Heaven and Hell and was consequently accused of heresy, killed and quickly reburied.

In part two, Ted Harrison looks at cases of those who claim not just to have returned from near-death experiences, but to have visited Heaven (and sometimes Hell) in the process...

NOTE

1 A sad aftermath to his story is that he apparently suffered brain damage and is now in prison, convicted of arson and manslaughter of his father and a lodger. *D.Mirror, 1 Nov 2011.*

2 Vedamurthy Adhiyaman, Sonja Adhiyaman, & Radha Sundaram: "The Lazarus phenomenon", *JRSM Dec 2007*; 100(12): 552–557. *FT*'s archive includes many more than the 38 cases of Lazarus syndrome described in the *JSRM.* Our last round-ups were in **FT262:10–11** and **FT289:10–11**.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

TED HARRISON is a writer, artist, broadcaster and former BBC Religious Affairs Correspondent. His work in modern stigmata earned him a PhD in theology. He has researched the Elvis Presley and Princess Diana cults, and his latest book, *Apocalypse When?* is due out from Darton, Longman and Todd in July.

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HAVE YOUR SAY

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What's my motivation?

Ascribing motives to paranormal entities or looking for final explanations of fortean events is often counterproductive, argues **SD TUCKER**; perhaps we'd be better off treating them more like poetry…

SD TUCKER is a writer based in the Merseyside area. His latest book, provisionally entitled *Haunted Merseyside*, will be published by Amberley later this year.

ALEXANDER TOMLINSON

In July 1953, a miner in Brush Creek, California, saw a strange being alight from a flying saucer. His appearance was odd, for an alien; he wore green trousers, a jacket and a tie. His shoes were particularly weird; although they were obviously shoes, they seemed somehow to be part of the man's feet. He was wearing a green cap over black hair and was of somewhat small stature.

This 'alien' appears so bizarre to us, largely because (shoes and height aside) he seems so human. He even wore a tie! Due to the colour of his clothes, he is definitely a kind of 'little green man' – but a man nonetheless. And, seeing that he was a 'man', the witness who saw him come from the saucer felt that he must have had some human-like motivations for visiting Earth. And, lo and behold, this motive soon became apparent; he was fetching water, perhaps for his craft, in a little bucket – and, what's more, an actual *space-bucket*. Apparently, the miner "had never seen a bucket quite like it. The sides flared out like the segments of a cone. It looked like aluminium, or some other shiny metal."[1] Perhaps, then, it wasn't really a bucket at all…

When people see visions (as we might interpret a case like this one), they tend to ascribe some kind of motivations to the entities which appear in them. It makes them more comprehensible… more human. When a young girl is seen in 18th-century dress, floating through an old deserted castle, say, we come up with some kind of story to account for her doing so; she is wandering through the night, searching for her lost lover who died a tragic death at the hands of her evil husband perhaps. The fact that no woman of such a description ever lived in the castle is immaterial; it's a nice story, and it neatly 'explains' the maiden's presence – indeed the reason for her very being. Folklorists even have a name for this process – it's called 'back formation'. Personally, I think that tales of ufonauts gathering water in buckets, or taking soil samples for scientific analysis back on their home planet, are much the same thing, although happening contemporaneously with the sighting itself, as an integral part of it. In short, it seems that many visions provide their own reasons for appearing in the first place.

Just as numerous are experiences with supernatural beings which act apparently with no rhyme nor reason. For example, in 1692 strange happenings were taking place around the town of Gloucester, Massachusetts. Events began when poltergeist-like sounds resembling "persons… going and running about" were heard around the household of a local family, the Babsons. Soon, Ebenezer, the head of the home, was seeing and pursuing figures who collectively performed such bizarre and pointless actions as throwing stones against barns and, on one occasion, "walking backward and forward, and striking with a stick upon John Row's deserted house".[2]

But why would these ghosts continually walk up and down outside an empty house, repeatedly hitting it with sticks? Were they insane? Perhaps it is futile even to look for an answer. When we try to assign motives to ghosts and aliens, we are, ultimately, trying to do no more than recreate them as something other than they actually are, assimilating them to our worldview in order to better make sense of them. It's what we do with things we don't understand – we make stories out of them and then, mistakenly or otherwise, take these fictions for reality.

Instead of trying to penetrate the motives of these apparently independent beings, then, it might be better to view them as being essentially inscrutable, and perhaps forever unknowable. This doesn't mean that we should ignore them – merely that we should stop trying to *explain* them. Ultimate, final explanations, in the realms of forteana, aren't always possible. Instead, subjective *interpretations* of phenomena would seem to me to be a better way to go. In short, I think that we should treat the 'paranormal' not as a series of scientific problems to be solved, but, rather, as something more in the nature of a form of spontaneous (presumably unauthored) poetry, a series of visionary happenings to be experienced and engaged with, like dreams.

Why the comparison with poetry? Because poetry's meaning is not fixed; it emerges somewhere between the page and the brain, during the act of reading. Its precise nuances shift from reader to reader. There is no definitive interpretation of any one poem, just as there is no one final 'explanation' of the Gloucester ghosts; instead, there is a much richer, more fluid series of *potential* meanings. Approaching the paranormal with the aim of finding any concrete and lasting meaning in its appearance is like learning a certain specific interpretation of a poem for an exam – it serves its purpose, but it's hardly the point of the thing. **FT**

NOTES

[1] Gray Barker: *They Knew Too Much About Flying Saucers*, IllumiNet Press, 1996, p45.

[2] Robert Damon Schneck: *The President's Vampire*, Anomalist Books, 2005, pp9, 13.

Who's the darkest of them all?

Snow White and the Huntsman is the latest example of Hollywood's current taste for 'dark' fairy tales. **MARIA J PÉREZ CUERVO** returns to the original sources and finds their world of jealousy, murder, cannibalism and ritual sacrifice makes recent film versions look tame in comparison.

MARIA J PÉREZ CUERVO is a Bristol-based Spanish journalist who has worked for print, TV and e-media. Her interests include history, popular culture, Victoriana and doppelgängers. She has survived eight British winters.

ABOVE: Snow White's wicked stepmother, as played by Charlize Theron in the latest interpretation, *Snow White and the Huntsman*.

FACING PAGE: A more traditional view of Snow White, the Seven Dwarfs and Prince Charming.

Adapting fairy tales with a darker edge seems to be a popular trend in Hollywood: *Hansel and Gretel: Witch Hunters*, Bryan Singer's *Jack the Giant Killer* and Guillermo Del Toro's reinvention of *Pinocchio* are all in the making, and procedural fantasy drama *Grimm* has been renewed for a second season on NBC. This year has seen the release of two retellings of Snow White. The darker of the two, *Snow White and the Huntsman*, released on 30 May, presents a witch queen with echoes of Elizabeth Bathory, and introduces a warrior-heroine stronger than the singing housewife-princess popularised by Disney. But any "newly found" dark elements fade when compared to the earliest written versions. The tale, which evolved through centuries, has elements of murderous jealousy, ritual cannibalism, sexual temptation, necrophilia and capital punishment.

Although the popularity of the 1937 Walt Disney adaptation eclipsed any previous portrayals, the best-known written version is the one collected by the Grimm brothers in their *Nursery and Household Tales* (1812). Almost two centuries earlier, Italian author Giambatista Basile had collected several folktales in his *Pentamerone* (1643), among them a story called *The Young Slave*, generally considered to be the first written version of *Snow White*, though it also has similarities with *Sleeping Beauty*, *The Beauty and the Beast* and *Bluebeard*. The Grimms edited their fairytales for a period of over four decades. The volume, initially intended for academic study, quickly gained popularity and was gradually "sanitised" and transformed into a children's book.

The Grimms' story is set in midwinter, in an icy-cold landscape, with a queen sewing in front of the ebony-framed window of a castle from which she sees a snow-covered forest. She pricks her finger and three drops of her blood fall on the snow. She then wishes she could have a child "as white as snow, as red as blood and as black as the ebony window-frame". The three colours are a theme repeated throughout the story, and their symbolism of light, blood and darkness has been widely discussed.[1]

Mirrors have been linked to divination by scrying

In popular culture, Snow White's nemesis is her wicked stepmother – her mother, we're told, died in labour. But the Grimms' first written manuscript suggests otherwise. The figure of the wicked stepmother stems from the 1819 version. In the original manuscript of 1810, the woman who hates the little girl to the point of ordering her death is her own mother. The replacement of the wicked maternal figure for a nemesis with whom the protagonist shares no blood ties was a frequent purge made by the Grimms, also seen in *Hansel and Gretel* and *Mother Holle*.

The power of the evil queen is fundamentally based in her beauty. But she also possesses a magic apparatus, the mirror – a stern, merciless judge that, like the eye of providence, has the power of omniscience. This is the first indication of the character's taste for witchcraft: since antiquity, mirrors or reflective surfaces have been linked to divination by scrying.

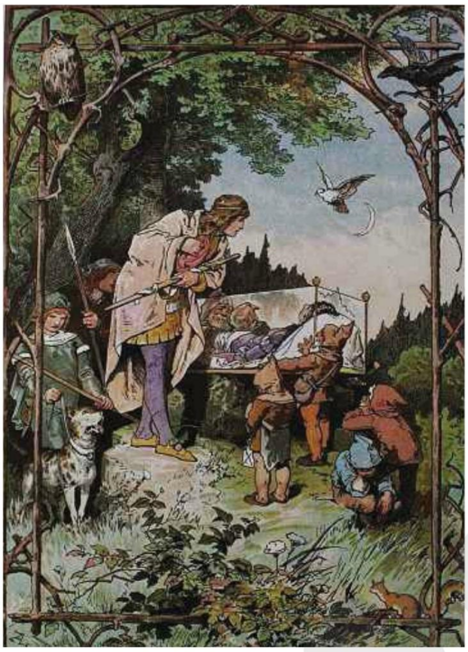
Popular culture has assimilated the figure of Snow White with that of an adolescent in the process of reaching sexual maturity. The reason is that, archetypically, the tale can be read as a parable of sexual awakening. But let's get back to the Grimms' version. In it, she's only seven when the mirror decides she's more beautiful than the queen. Naturally, seven is a symbolic number that also appears in its written predecessor, *The Young Slave*. Even by mediæval standards, when young girls were married from the age of 10, this is a very early age for reaching puberty.

Mad with envy, feeling that her power is threatened by the young girl's increasing beauty, the queen orders the huntsman (who in some versions is her lover) to kill Snow White and bring back her lungs and liver. The huntsman takes her to the forest, but when he is about to kill her, she begs for mercy and he feels incapable of harming a creature of such beauty. He finally abandons her in the deep forest, convinced that the wild beasts will take her. To provide the internal organs, the huntsman – in what historian of religions Norman Girardot suggests is a throwback to the "sacrificial rites of the virgin maiden" – kills a wild boar instead. In antiquity, these were frequently used as a substitute for human sacrifice to appease the gods.

The subsequent part of the story has been largely forgotten – and rarely shown in film adaptations. When the queen receives what she believes are her daughter's viscera, she decides she'll have them salted and boiled, then feasts upon them with epicurean pleasure. The root of her pleasure rests on two facts: she has obliterated her daughter, her rival, but also, crucially, this anthropophagic act preserves the essence of ritual cannibalism – the ancient belief that eating enemies' flesh was a source of spiritual and physical strength. By eating Snow White, the queen believes she will embody her characteristics. The choice of organs is relevant: lungs represent the breath, the spirit; the liver is a symbol of purification, as it cleanses the blood. In *The Hard Facts of the Grimms' Fairy Tales*, Maria Tatar points out that different versions include different "gifts": the most familiar one is the young girl's heart; but in Spain, it's "a bottle of blood stoppered with the girl's toe", whereas in Italy, the huntsman must return with "her intestines and her blood-soaked shirt" or her eyes and a bottle of her blood.

Meanwhile, the wild beasts in the forest haven't harmed Snow White, and she has found a place to rest: the house where the seven dwarfs live. The dwarfs don't appear in any Italian texts, but they're a traditional figure in German folklore, associated with mining and the arts of the blacksmith, which suggests that they were probably a German addition. Although in some versions they are robbers, in the Grimms' narrative they are merely miners who search for gold.[2] Most importantly, they become Snow White's helpers. In the 1810 manuscript, they allow her to stay on the condition that she cooks for them. By 1812, however, their contract is more demanding: "If you keep house for us, do the cooking, make the beds, wash, sew, knit and keep everything neat and clean, you can stay with us". Although the contract reminds us of an old-fashioned marriage (undoubtedly expressing the Grimms' ideas about household duties), the dwarfs are completely desexualised. Older narratives that present them as robbers remain more ambiguous, inevitably raising questions about the precise nature of such arrangements.

The queen finds out that Snow White is alive through the voice of her magic mirror. This is the point at which she fully resorts to witchcraft, going to her secret room to brew some potions, then disguising herself as an old pedlar to visit the girl. Her first two gifts (bodice lace that asphyxiates the victim, and a poisoned comb) aren't strong enough to kill Snow White, who on both occasions is saved by the dwarfs, but she is finally taken, or so it seems, by the poisoned apple. The nature of the three gifts reinforces the idea of the tale as an allegory of sexual awakening, culminating in the apple reminiscent of original sin (even the Latin word for apple, "malum", also means evil), an image so powerful that it has resisted the passage of time and reappears in contemporary urban legends, namely the poisoned Hallowe'en candy.



Thinking she's dead, the dwarfs place Snow White, rather morbidly, in a glass coffin. But of course, she doesn't decompose – she's merely there, on display, like an incorrupt saint. It's a tableau that associates sanctity and physical beauty in the manner of Cicero or St Augustine. She remains in the coffin "for a very long time", during which she presumably reaches puberty.

The 1810 manuscript carries a suggestion of incest, as it's her father who awakens Snow White and takes revenge on the queen. The Grimms replaced him with the figure of Prince Charming, who falls for the image of the maiden in the coffin. The tale explains that "he offered the dwarfs money, and earnestly prayed them to let him take her away". The question of what a young prince might want with the incorrupt corpse of a beautiful princess seems to be taking us into Poe territory. The dwarfs initially refuse, but finally take pity and give him the coffin. There is no life-giving kiss, though, but a contrived sort of Heimlich manoeuvre provided by the shaking of the glass coffin when being transported to the prince's castle. The apple comes out of Show White's throat, and by means of this *deus ex machina* she's instantly revived. It is then that the prince asks her to marry him, and she consents.

The evil queen meets a gory end, punished to dance to her death in a pair of hot iron slippers, an obscure torture device that, as reported in 18th-century inquisitorial documents, burned the flesh to the bone.

In the tale, beauty is a form of power; it is stronger than witchcraft. Beauty saves Snow White from a fatal destiny on three occasions. But what happens when beauty fades? The evil queen, the tragic heroine, resorts to witchcraft and encounters capital punishment. Mythographer Marina Warner writes that the tale "encode(s) a lesson in resignation to the passage of time, the overtaking of age by youth". In *The Madwoman in the Attic*, Gilbert and Gubar conclude that the mirror is an embodiment of the patriarchal culture that forces the confrontation between the two female characters – a reading most appropriate when translated into a Hollywood context.

In the end, it's the tale's powerful symbolism, to which these dark elements are key, that ensures its survival in the collective imagination. And even if, in this latest version, the princess is transformed into an Amazon, the horror of the story's warning – *tempus fugit* – haunts us still. **FT**

NOTES

[1] Historian of religions Norman Girardot analyses the tale as a story of initiation, underlining the parallelism with the three phases of the alchemical process (*nigredo*, *albedo* and *rubedo*), that, just like the tale, would represent the cycle of death, purification and rebirth.

[2] Miners and blacksmiths, going back to the Greek god Hephæstus and the Egyptian deity Ptah, are represented as short, somewhat deformed, often with a limp. Medical history suggests that ancient metal workers could have suffered the effect of toxic substances such as lead, copper and arsenic, causing peripheral neuritis that was translated into weakness, and often lameness, of the lower extremities, among other consequences. In *Snow White: Is it a Fairy Tale?* (1994), Eckhard Sander suggests the possibility that the "real" dwarfs could have been deformed child miners in Bad Wildungen.

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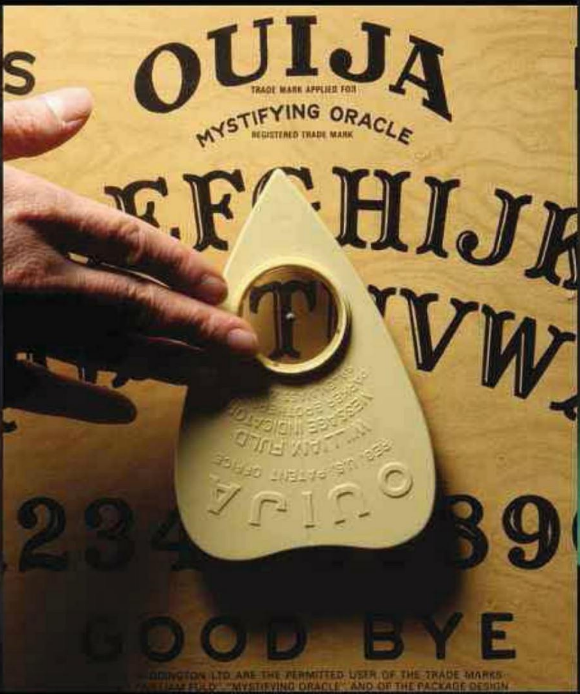
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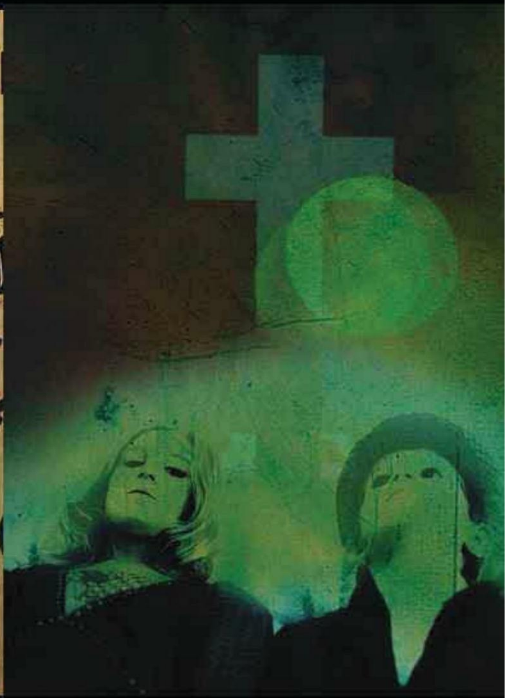

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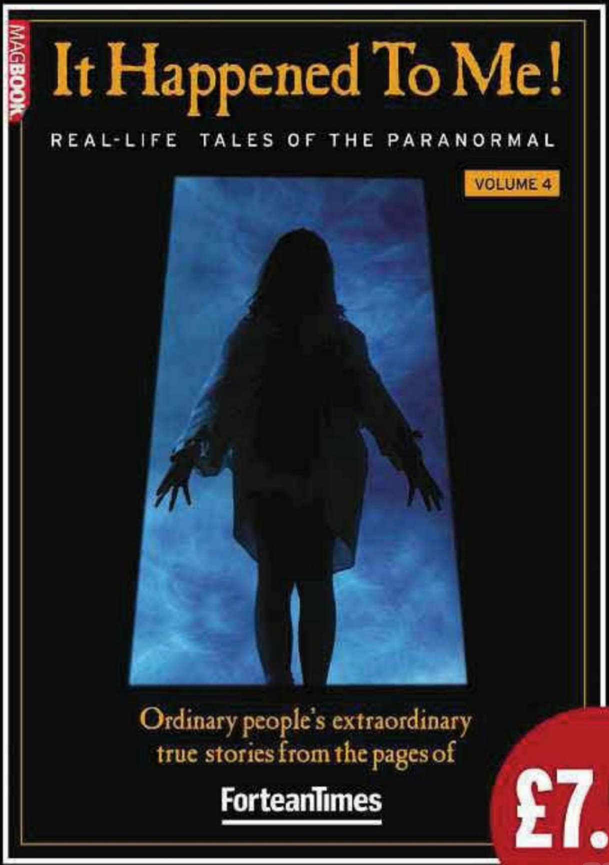
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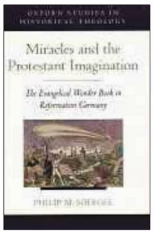
German signs and wonders

Evangelical Lutherans interpreted all manner of catastrophes and oddness – rains of wheat, monstrous births and aerial regiments – as examples of God's wrath



Miracles and the Protestant Imagination

The Evangelical Wonder Book in Reformation Germany

Philip M Soergel

Oxford University Press 2012

Hb, 234pp, illus, notes, ind, £40.00, ISBN 9780199844661

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £36.00

In the 16th century, Europe was in the throes of an intellectual, ideological and cultural revolution. Professor Soergel shows how a Europe still in the grip of sporadic outbreaks of witch persecutions and cultish millennialism did not become disenchanted with the world but developed a vigorous fascination with natural wonders (such as scenic beauty and celestial phenomena) and misfortune (such as deaths by lightning or plagues, monstrous births and odd accidents).

This study focuses on the influence of the 'wonder books' of 16th-century Germany on the popular imagination. They were the printed counterparts to the great 'curiosity cabinets' accumulated by scholars and the rich and, Soergel discovered, more than 220,000 survived into the 17th century.

Most were pamphlets or printed sermons, but a good number were encyclopædic works (*compendia*) that catalogued natural wonders in a way that proved useful for both the proto-scientists and the evangelical Lutherans, whose polemics interpreted all manner of catastrophes and fates as examples of God's wrath and punishment for wickedness and blasphemy.

However, where Luther thought 'natural signs' were inferior to scriptural testimony, 'natural philosophers' such as Melanchthon used them rhetorically to demonstrate Christian principles. This, in turn, prepared many late-Reformation scholars for the divorce of theology from science. By the end of the century, says Soergel, there was "a greater faith in the human ability to master, understand, and appreciate the [physical] environment." That this intellectual transition was undertaken by the Protestants as well as the scientists, he declares, "is a testament to human adaptability and inventiveness."

Catholic commentators at the time laughed (perhaps nervously) at the credulity of the Lutherans generally, but particularly the 'prognosticators' who interpreted omens and portents. A Catholic bishop of Nevers, more seriously, blamed the "proliferation of countless monsters" in Saxony on "Luther's perfidious fraud".

Post-Reformation commentators have also tended to treat the wonder books with some scorn as 'superstitious' narratives written by credulous people who could not see that a flood "was a problem of meteorology, not of morality". Soergel's research shows that this view is inadequate because many were "considerably less sensationalistic" than the equivalent accounts of the Great Fire of Chicago or the *Titanic* sinking.

"A Catholic bishop of Nevers blamed the 'proliferation of monsters' in Saxony on Luther's fraud"

Fingering great disasters as signs of divine punishment and eternal damnation was nothing new but, according to Soergel, Lutheran sermons began to address the psychological consequences of great tragedy and mass trauma.

He gives an example of a devastating fire at Zittau in 1592, in which the author moves on from the usual likeness to 'the fires of Hell' and call for repentance to expand on how fire is a refining agent, a reminder of the transitory nature of things and a sign of the greater wonders that await us in Heaven.

Another example is a report on the Thuringian *Sintflut* of 29 May 1613, an all-night thunderstorm of unprecedented ferocity that laid waste to an area "the size of Delaware". It included a five-hour bombardment of egg-sized hail that killed livestock and people, and destroyed the Spring crops. This was followed by devastating flash floods, reaching 25ft (7.6m) high in places, which lasted all the next day.

Its author, significantly, didn't blame it all on God's anger. He summarised the damage and death toll town by town, noting that neither was as bad as it could have been; concluding that the economic damage from the flood (debris made roads impassable, mud filled cellars everywhere, and several mills and a salt works were ruined) had far more serious consequences.

Wonder books were compiled by "university-educated theologians" for their peers and patrons, and their dry erudition contrasted with the breathlessness of the popular black-letter broadsheets. After the mid 1500s, Soergel notes, "the wonder books and cheap broadsides became linked in a circuit of continual cross-fertilisation." His scholarly analysis of one of these, a rich vein of historical forteana previously inaccessible to us, is well written, clear and concise, and supported by translations of the many rare documents he has located.

Besides the extreme forms of weather, Soergel makes detailed excursions into monstrous births and other deformities of animals, plants and humans; atmospheric and astronomical phenomena (comets and meteorites, the supernova of 1572, sundogs and multiple suns, aerial visions of armies and biblical warnings); and rains of wheat. The fortean will delight in most of this, though to the contemporary reader they were frightening disturbances of the natural order and signs of mankind's degeneracy.

Yet it has modern relevance. If we overlook the 'God's anger' argument, says Soergel, there is a valid correspondence between the Lutheran association of "human sinfulness and earthly suffering" and the view of today's conservationists that ecological disasters are our 'punishment' for abusing the planet.

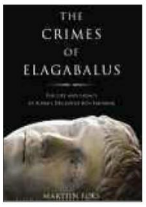
Bob Rickard

Fortean Times Verdict

EXCELLENT, DETAILED STUDY OF EARLY LUTHERAN BELIEFS **9**

A bad glutton

An attempt to separate fact and fiction in the life of the teenage Roman emperor



The Crimes of Elagabalus

Martijn Icks

IB Tauris 2012

Hb, xi+276pp, illus, bib, ind, £22.50,
ISBN 9781848553621

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £20.25

Cobbled together from previous articles, this book was scooped by Leonardo de Arrizabalaga y Prado's *The Emperor Elagabalus* (2010), which Icks claimed appeared too late for him to discuss, despite his having published a dismissive review of it ("ultimately unsatisfying") a year earlier in *Sepunkte* (online). Such are the ways of academe… Still, David Leafe's lavish spread on Elagabalus in the *Daily Mail* (28 Dec 2011) may have been consolation for being pipped into print.

Both these books, like most on this ultimate teenager (despite the blurb, Elagabalus is not a novel topic, as Icks's 11-page bibliography betrays), take the same tack. The 'Amazing' (so titularly dubbed by JS Hay's 1911 biography) emperor's lurid exploits (cf. my detailed inventory, **FT251:21**) are laid out, then questioned and/or debunked via the process of source criticism.

This is a necessary procedure: of our three authorities, Dio Cassius is sober but limited; Herodian slapdash; and the scandal-loving *Historia Augusta* (biographies of uncertain author and date) the most notoriously unreliable of all Roman documents. Source criticism is also a hazardous procedure: how does one set about Mommsen's prescription to "Dare to test the study of history by the logic of the facts"?

FT readers will find chapter 4 ('The Rejected Ruler') most congenial. Here are all the tasty tabloid tales, with much erotic emphasis (Elagabalus's self-circumcision – ouch! – and planned pioneering sex change, plus fantastic hetero-homo frolics) and his gastro-excesses. (Icks might have mentioned that his name in Spanish – 'heliogábalo' – means 'glutton'.) I give pride of place to his smothering of dinner-guests with falling rose-petals, famously painted in 1888 by Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, and to his one intellectual effort, viz. commandeering 1,000lb (450kg) of spiders' webs in order to calculate the city's size, a mathematical novelty with its own web site.

The second half details Elagabalus's after-life in art, films, literature, music and painting, complete with Internet samplings, with a handy Wikipedia-style checklist of same. Icks has impressive eagle eyes and a wide net.

A reviewer can always supplement, without criticism. For instance: Swinburne's "St Dorothy"; Anna Gavalda's *La Consolante* (2008), CH de Escobar's *Heliogabalo* (1989), David Chacko's *The Severan Prophecies* (2007), French rock band Heliogabale, plus assorted appearances in Japanese Manga comics and YouTube clips.

Ick's English (not his native language) is straightforward, albeit repetitive and sometimes cat-sat-on-the-mattish, but commendably free from academic bafflegab. There are errors concerning Suetonius's *Life of Domitian*, Ctesias's *Persica* fragments, the date of Syme's trail-blazing *The Roman Revolution* (1939, not 1958); also, the remarks on Niebuhr are self-contradictory.

Barry Baldwin

Fortean Times Verdict
TABLOID TALES OF A NAUGHTY EMPEROR'S LURID EXPLOITS **8**

The Sign

The Shroud of Turin and the Secret of the Resurrection

Thomas de Wesselow

Penguin Viking 2012

Hb, 448pp, illus, notes, bib, ind, £20.00, ISBN
9780670921874

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £16.50

De Wesselow's theory is that the Turin Shroud is the authentic relic of Christ's resurrection. For this to work, you have to accept the historical reality of the synoptic Gospels and his four arguments.

First, that the carbon-dating 'proof' was a fiasco and possibly a conspiracy. Second, that the Shroud's provenance can be traced back to the time of Jesus's death. (De Wesselow embraces Ian Wilson's case for the Shroud's origins in antiquity, and has only to finesse the existing spadework.)Third, that the Shroud's image is the 'genuine' product of a biophysical process, not an artistic creation. The author, an art historian, must surely know his onions when he asserts that it is unlike anything an artist would have created and contravenes the conventions of depicting Christ.

These theories are attractively argued. They suggest that Wilson's 'folded cloth' theory can overcome the historical gaps and that 'Maillard reactions' are the one explanation for the image that don't have recourse to the miraculous flash-burn thesis coming from the latest work of the Italian laser scientists.

Then there's de Wesselow's *pièce de résistance* fourth idea. The disciples equated the Shroud image with the appearance of the Risen Christ, thus solving the entire mystery of the Resurrection and what happened that first Easter.

Here's where it gets more difficult.

At first it seems outlandish, even comic, to picture the Shroud converting the earliest Christians. But de Wesselow drives home the point of how the Shroud was a perfectly good substitute for a flesh-and-blood Christ with such imagination and passion that the problems of how a linen cloth could so impress the disciples can almost be forgotten. If it really was so important, though, how come direct references to it were omitted from the texts, and the artefact itself lost for centuries?

Jerry Glover

Fortean Times Verdict
WELL ARGUED, BUT RAISES MORE QUESTIONS THAN IT SOLVES **7**

Wormwood Star

The Magickal Life of Marjorie Cameron

Spencer Kansa

Mandrake of Oxford 2011

Pb, 280pp, illus, notes, ind, £12.99,
ISBN 9781906958084

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £11.69

The widow of rocket scientist and occultist Jack Parsons, Marjorie Cameron was an artist, actress, psychedelic explorer and, herself, an occultist. A link between the Thelemic magical circles of wartime California, the Beats and the Hippies, Cameron, who died in 1995, was linked to Aleister Crowley, Scientology's L Ron Hubbard, film-maker Kenneth Anger (in whose movies she appeared) and a number of other Hollywood figures such as Dennis Hopper.

Well-illustrated with photos and news clippings (but not, unfortunately, with her artwork), this is largely an oral history of Cameron's life compiled from a large number of interviews with people who knew her, some of them no longer with us. As such, it contains a wealth of fascinating detail about a largely neglected figure on the occult scene and the world she lived in, though what's ultimately revealed is a rather tragic individual who never entirely escaped from Parsons's shadow, perhaps somewhat different to the incarnation of Babalon she obviously believed herself to be.

Regrettably, Kansa doesn't write well and the manuscript would have benefited from a much firmer editorial hand. But if you can grit your teeth at the sentences without verbs and awful spelling, there's much to enjoy and intrigue.

Steve Moore

Fortean Times Verdict
A SORCERESS RESCUED FROM OBSCURITY **7**

I Must Not Think Bad Thoughts

Drive-by Essays on American Dread, American Dreams

Mark Dery

University of Minnesota Press 2012
Hb, 317pp, illus, notes, £18.50, ISBN 9780816677733

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £18.50

Mark Dery was at college when the band X's 'I must not think bad thoughts' nailed, as he says here, "the apolitical vacuity of the decade". Several decades later, he does the same in a collection of essays that fizz with ideas and neologisms ("sacrymose sentimentality") and takes pot-shots at the sacred cows of the left, right and centre.

In 'Dead Man Walking', he suggests that zombies ("a glassy-eyed metaphor") are fascinating because they "embody displaced rage about gut issues like food, shelter, and health care". He nips neatly from the colonial Haitian working stiff to the survivalists' 'Golden Horde', with 'zombie' as synonym for "border-jumping aliens, left-wing academics, and brain-eating libtards". For the white supremacist stormfront.org, the zombie apocalypse is a warning of the coming race war.

And then there's the discussion of HAL's sexuality, 'slash' erotica written by female and gay male *Star Trek* fans, cyborg porn, the Pope and his polar opposite (in doctrinal terms), Jack Chick, with his gospel of "millenarian fever, conspiracy theory and hit-and-run evangelism". And 2012 believers, of course, the "few thousand woo-woos whose mental engine blocks have cracked from one too many psychoactive alkaloids", the Vast Satanic Conspiracy, autoerotic fatalities (don't even think of a grease gun enema), even the Axe & Guillotine website ("The best in beheading"), plus various odds and sods of polymorphous perversity, all recounted with a rollicking sense of humour.

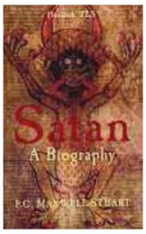
As Dery says, "Those who can't take a joke are doomed to repeat it."

Val Stevenson

Fortean Times Verdict
THINGS YOU DIDN'T (WANT TO) KNOW ABOUT AMERICA **9**

And shame the devil

The author of this mistitled book knows his stuff, but a tortured style and badly structured content get in the way of enjoyment



Satan

A Biography

PG Maxwell-Stuart

Amberley 2011
Pb, 224pp, illus, notes, bib, ind, £12.99, ISBN 9781445605753

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £11.69

It is a shame that a book so full of fascinating detail is so difficult to read. But that's only one of the problems with *Satan: A Biography*. For a start, the book is mis-titled. There's surprisingly little about Satan himself, his life, career, aspirations and fate, so to speak. The author makes the point that the earliest gods were neither good nor bad, but were often capricious. He mentions Zoroastrianism, the first monotheistic religion, which solved the theodicy problem by having an evil opponent to God, but grants it surprisingly little significance. And he discusses the development of Satan from "the satan", an adversary in the Old Testament, though he too easily conflates Lucifer with the Devil without even mentioning alternative interpretations.

The final chapter, 'Satan's Vengeful Return', doesn't deal, as might be expected, with the End Times, the Antichrist, the Tribulation, Armageddon and so forth; these are barely mentioned in a tiny handful of references scattered through the book. Early on he points out the disjunction between "the Devil's dominant, terrifying and apocalyptic associations, and the comparative triviality of what he actually does in many instances", but he never really addresses this.

Most of the book consists of accounts through the centuries of meetings with the Devil or demons in different forms, individually or at sabbats, and of possession. We should be grateful to the author for gathering these tales together, but their context is sadly opaque. It's often difficult to follow his argument as he goes from one story to another to another; what point is he making at any particular moment? This is partly the fault of his writing style, with its convoluted sentences and paragraphs sometimes a page long, but also of his awkward structuring of his text; for just one example, the first 10 pages of the chapter 'Meeting the Devil in Private' are about meeting him in public, which was the subject of the previous chapter.

The Devil more often than not appears in human form, and is only later identified as the Devil. The classic images of the Devil with horns and hoofs, he argues, stem from depictions on the mediæval stage. Perhaps his most useful point is that the demonising of the early Christians by Rome was transferred to Christian demonising of Jews, and then of heretics (Cathars and Waldensians in particular), and then of witches and those making pacts with the Devil, with a prevalence of toads, cats' buttocks, incestuous orgies and so on; he cites an early 15th-century tract describing Cathars "riding on a broom or a fork-handle".

The last chapter brings us up to the present day in an extremely cursory manner; he covers both Doreen Irvine's book *From Witchcraft to Christ* (which he rightly dismisses as "patent nonsense", though with no evidence) and the entirety of the Satanic Ritual Abuse furore in a single page. Anton LaVey's Church of Satan also scrapes a page, but other Satanists are ignored. These are among today's equivalents of mediæval dealings with the Devil, and any so-called 'biography' of Satan that does not cover them in some depth is seriously lacking.

Throughout, Maxwell-Stuart suggests that not all the accounts of meetings with or possession by the Devil are made up – "fraudulent, hysterical or pathological" – and on the last page he makes it clear that he believes Satan is real – an unusual stance for a present-day historian.

Finally, the four-page single-level index is a joke. In a book entitled Satan, what possible use is the entry "Satan" with 84 undifferentiated page numbers, or "Devil" with 102, or "demon" with 79, out of a total of 190 text pages? You'd think a scholar would know the importance of a good index.

PG Maxwell-Stuart, a lecturer in history at St Andrews, has written several books on witchcraft and related matters. On finishing writing this review I recalled reviewing an earlier work; looking back, I criticised him for much the same faults.

He clearly knows his material, but he desperately needs to learn how to present it in an accessible form.

David V Barrett

Fortean Times Verdict
A FASCINATING SUBJECT BUT VERY POORLY PRESENTED **5**

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A medical miscellany

A tiny selection of the National Library of Medicine's 17 million items ranges from mesmerism to Hitler's nasal passages

Hidden Treasure

The National Library of Medicine

Ed: Michael Sappol

Blast Books 2012

Hb, 240pp, illus, refs, ind, $50.00/£33.99,
ISBN 9780922233427

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKCLUB PRICE £33.99

Mary Roach, author of *Stiff*, writes that when she received *Hidden Treasure*, "I hugged it to my chest like a four-year-old with a new pair of shoes." I would have done the same, but I could hardly lift it!

The heft of this oversize book mirrors the weight of the collections in America's repository of medical history (and the world's largest medical library), the National Library of Medicine.

Led by Michael Sappol, curator-historian in the History of Medicine Division, dozens of doctors, scholars, collectors, and artists bring to light 240 pages' worth of the 17 million items accessioned since the establishment of the library 175 years ago.

They range across the continents (a book about China written in 1670 by Athanasius Kircher; an 18th-century Sri Lankan medical manuscript written on palm leaves, and a scrapbook from 1900s India about mesmerism) and through the centuries (a 16th-century book about illnesses and injuries to horses; a 17th-century palm-reading manual; a Japanese textbook on human dissection from 1772; "pop-up" books about anatomy and pregnancy from the 19th century; and a 1924 German bestseller about nudism).

Among the books and ephemera are items of enormous rarity and importance, such as the 1628 text by William Harvey describing the circulation of the blood, Edward Jenner's 1798 self-published book about cowpox, the mimeographed report of the first Japanese medical team to enter Hiroshima after the atomic blast in 1945, and the manuscript papers of Marshall W Nirenberg dating from 1937 to 2003 about cracking the DNA code.

Within these mostly paper treasures are images that will make the fortean heart flutter: an antique photo of a six-fingered hand from an album of gelatin silver prints, a picture and description of the physical makeup of a hermaphrodite published in a pamphlet after his death in 1838, and the drawing of a man with a full-body tattoo included in a 19th-century atlas of skin diseases.

Sideshow historian James Taylor calls the scrapbook about conjoined brothers Chang and Eng Bunker by an unknown compiler a "reliquary of the promotional haze of entertainment, commerce, and science that surrounded the twins."

Everything in the NLM collection (and thus in *Hidden Treasure*) – multilingual eyecharts, postcards of nurses, films about schizophrenia and tuberculosis, and stereoscopic viewing cards, to name a few genres – is tethered to the sober history of medical science, even the copperplate engravings in a 1744 Dance of Death volume with text in German and French.

But one anatomy text from 1911 was loudly criticised at the time for its shockingly dispassionate photographs: Eugène-Louis Doyen, of France, provoked the medical community by illustrating his atlas with views of mechanically sliced cadavers.

Other books mitigate the horror with their production values, or puzzle rather than push. Writer and translator Antony Shugaar calls one gilt-edged Italian volume from 1826 "an odd concoction, a beautifully crafted manuscript of distressing case histories and shocking illustrations." When characterising an 1889 atlas of anatomy and deformities, author Mary Capello (whose book *Swallow* is reviewed in **FT273**) comments: "We aren't sure if what we are looking at is part of a human face or a cloth snipped with a ragged-edged pair of scissors."

Mary can be forgiven for her momentary confusion as the turn of each page may reveal a set of blocks used to teach Chinese children the principles of health and hygiene or a graphically illustrated treatise on the treatment of gunshot wounds.

One minute we are making the rounds with Florence Nightingale and the next we are staring at the X-ray of Adolf Hitler's nasal passages.

Just as the items range up and down the historical timeline, they range across the scale from quaint (a tiny notebook in which a certain Elizabeth Strachey collected recipes for remedies from 1693 to the 1730s) to the unsettling (a fragment of a 16mm French film about masks made to cover the mutilated faces of soldiers in World War I).

The accompanying essays illuminate, rather than overshadow, the 450 colour illustrations.

And what I've described is only a sampling of what's indexed within these covers, which are – in the words of Howard Carter as he peered into the newly-discovered tomb of King Tutankhamun – "wonderful things".

One caveat: don't read it if you are a hypochondriac!

Christine Quigley

Fortean Times Verdict

WONDERFUL THINGS FOR LOVERS OF MEDICAL CURIOSITIES **10**

Bloody London

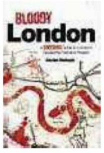
A Shocking guide to London's Gruesome Past and Present

Declan McHugh

Crimson Books 2012

Pb, 167pp, illus, ind, £6.99, ISBN 9781780590691

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKCLUB PRICE £6.99



This could be described as the book of the walk: Declan McHugh has led the Blood and Tears Walk for 13 years, introducing tourists and others to the byways of London's gore and misery. It's much better than that makes it sound; it's breezy, humorous and opinionated (he's really not a fan of Aleister Crowley), and he squishes in a lot of information.

The books opens with Dennis Nilsen (who thought the cast of a film of his life should be listed in order of disappearance), sideswipes Crowley and moves swiftly onto the polymath Elizabethan, Dr John Dee ("more other-worldly than worldly-wise"). The fun Dee fact is that he was the original 007 in the service of his Queen and Country, with the zeroes standing for his two eyes, and the seven for his senses.

And so onwards, through burial pits, plague deaths (slaying a couple of urban myths in passing), the Hunterian Museum's medical curiosities – including the Irish Giant and Sicilian Fairy – and centuries of execution at Tyburn.

Fortean treats include the 1960's strange Process Church of the Final Judgement ("Release the Fiend within you!"), the (obligatory) Jack the Ripper, the Temple Church, the Hellfire Club (well, John Wilkes, really), the Temple of Mithras and the Bethlem Hospital, the madhouse which gave us the word 'bedlam'.

Most touching is the obscure but atmospheric Cross Bones graveyard in Borough, where paupers and 'Winchester Geese', the prostitutes whose efforts benefited the bishop, were dumped into unconsecrated ground. As Shelley said, "Hell is a city much like London."

William Darragh

Fortean Times Verdict

CHILLING WALKS FOR LONDONERS AND VISITORS ALIKE **8**

ALSO RECEIVED

We leaf through a small selection of the dozens of books that have arrived at Fortean Towers in recent months...

GHOSTS CAUGHT ON FILM 3
Gordon Rutter

David & Charles (rubooks.com) 2011
Hb, pp159, illus, index, £12.99
ISBN 9780715339039

The idea of this lavishly produced study of alleged photographs of ghosts came about in a discussion during a one-day conference at the International Science Festival in Edinburgh in 2008, organised by Richard Wiseman, our own Gordon Rutter and others. A special website was created with an open invitation to submit 'ghostly images', whether faked or with claims of authenticity. Here, Gordon evaluates the most convincing. There is an introductory essay and chapter-long themed collections focusing (forgive the pun) on orbs, family gatherings, discovered figures, faces and heads, scenic locations, images from mobile phones, and photos taken in and around Edinburgh. The closing chapter presents the five most convincing. This would make an excellent present, or introduction to the subject for any budding ghost-hunter or photographer.

SYMBOLS OF ETERNITY: LANDWORKS FOR A SOUL JOURNEY
Malcolm Stewart

Floris Books (florisbooks.co.uk) 2011
Pb, pp215, index, refs, illus, £20.00
ISBN 9780863158377

This is a beautifully illustrated essay on sacred geometry, of the sort that John Michell used to do, analysing examples from ancient megalithic cultures through to the temples of modern religions. It's constructed around highly personal meditations on archetypal forms, Platonic solids and patterns, and on divine creation as it is expressed through secular and ritual art and architecture of different cultures. His closing chapter explores the idea of a cube as a symbol of God. Malcolm Stewart is admirably filling the void left by Michell's death.

THE CRYPTOPEDIA: A DICTIONARY OF THE WEIRD, STRANGE AND DOWNRIGHT BIZARRE
Jonathan Mayberry and David F. Kramer

Citadel Press (Kensington.com) 2007
Pb, pp394, illus, plates, $16.95
ISBN 9780806528199

Conceived as a thematic dictionary of "the weird, strange & downright bizarre", with alphabetical entries under 13 chapters (covering astrology, cryptozoology, angels and demons, divination, elves and fairies, ESP and parapsychology, herbs and stones, mythology, New Age, superstitions, UFOs, vodun, and Wicca). A lot of work went into this but it's pretty useless – most of the entries are too brief, shallow and short of useful references. Even the commissioned illustrations seem clumsy and pointless.

FENG SHUI: SECRETS OF CHINESE GEOMANCY
Richard Creightmore

Wooden Books (woodenbooks.com) 2011
Pb, pp58, illus, £5.99
ISBN 9781904263869

UFO: STRANGE SPACE ON EARTH
Paul Whitehead & George Wingfield

Wooden Books (woodenbooks.com) 2011
Pb, pp58, illus, £5.99
ISBN 9781904263755

Over the years, Wooden Books have made a name for themselves with these beautifully designed compact editions, specially printed in China on quality recycled paper. They are presented as mini-compendia of essential information. The full series of over 50 titles can be viewed on their website and covers the whole spectrum of 'New Agey' topics, from fractal maths and chaos theory to mythological animals, megaliths, sacred springs, mazes, illusions and art. These two latest additions – on Chinese geomancy and ufology – are, like all of them, by well-known writers in their fields. Any of them would make very thoughtful and inspiring presents.

KEEP OUT!
Nick Redfern

New Page Books (careerpress.com) 2012
Pb, pp288, index, bib, illus, £14.99
ISBN 9781601631848

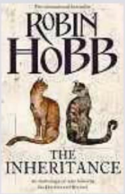
The prodigious Nick Redfern investigates "the top secret places governments don't want you to know about". If there were any truth to the legends of massive top-level conspiracies (another of Redfern's topics), how was he able to find out so much about these secret bases and labs worldwide, never mind publish it for all to read? Alternatively, one might be forgiven for thinking that perhaps Redfern and his unstoppable output must be part of an equally sinister counter-information campaign. Nick, as usual, comes across as intelligent and sensible and presents a useful briefing on a complex subject.

CONSPIRACY
Ian Shore

AdLib (johnblakepublishing.co.uk) 2012
Pb, pp293, index, notes, £7.99
ISBN 9781843583776

If you weren't already a paranoid worrier, you might be crafting a tinfoil hat after reading this book. Shore's deceptively clear summaries of his top 50 conspiracies make good briefings and are up to date with Litvinenko, Dr Kelly, Wikileaks, the London bombings and the Icelandic ash-cloud. Each topic's believability is scored. It's written for a popular market but makes a useful reference.

FORTEAN FICTION



The Inheritance
Robin Hobb/Megan Lindholm

Harper Voyager, 2012
Pb, pp416, £7.99
ISBN 9780007446346

At first glance, *The Inheritance* looks like a cosy collection about cats. While I would accept that it includes tales with cats, this collection of Robin Hobb/Megan Lindholm's stories is edgier and more diverse than the cover would suggest. The book is divided into two parts. I suspect most readers will pick this up on the potential of the three Hobb tales at the back of the book. In comparison with other stories in the collection, they are (as Hobb herself admits), sprawling accounts, yet many readers will welcome a return to the fantasy world of the Elderlings. In a shorter form there's obviously not the depth of the novels, though there's some interesting back history and some astute Jane Austen-like social commentary.

In contrast, the majority of the 10 tales are written under the pseudonym of Megan Lindholm, and mainly written before Robin Hobb was published. Though less well-known, they work better because of their relative anonymity. Lindholm's contemporary urban fantasy stories are taut, character-driven tales, touching on topics as diverse as drug addiction, social welfare, alien musicianship, unusual love affairs, boiling cats, vampires and female circumcision. Lindholm's darker tone usually reveals desperately needy characters with often difficult lives, yet ones we soon care about.

Throughout, the author introduces each of the stories with good humour and personality. Readers will be pleased and perhaps surprised at the range of Hobb/Lindholm's short story career to date. It's good to have them all in one place, although they make a collection to be valued more for its creative diversity than its cohesive uniformity.

Mark Yon

SEND REVIEW COPIES OF DVDS AND GAMES TO:
THE EDITOR, **FORTEAN TIMES**, DENNIS CONSUMER DIVISION,
30 CLEVELAND STREET, LONDON W1T 4JD, UK.

Prometheus

Dir Ridley Scott, US 2012
On UK release from 1 June

Ridley Scott's *Prometheus* has finally berthed in the multiplexes. Over 30 years after his original SF-horror classic *Alien* spawned a franchise as persistent as the Giger-inspired creature that would not die, Scott has returned to space to reclaim his deadly baby from the monstrosity of films like *Alien vs. Predator: Requiem* (during which you could hear yourself scream). Robot Ash's description of the alien lifeform as the "perfect organism" was equally applicable to *Alien* the film. The plot was pared down to something of sublime simplicity; the uniformly excellent cast riffed off each other with seemingly effortless improvisatory skill amid a huge but claustrophobic, lived-in looking commercial spaceship; and this was complimented by a hostile otherworld landscape and alien spacecraft interior truly vast in art-directorial conception. It all added to an air of immersive verisimilitude in what was, after all, a vision of the future.

More than three decades on, Scott's ability to create breathtaking futuristic landscapes remains supreme. That's part of the good news, as is the performance of Noomi Rapace in the nominal central role. She proves herself to be a worthy younger sister to Sigourney Weaver's Ellen Ripley, her tenacious performance holding its own against those jaw-dropping otherworldly vistas, even though the script gives her much less to say or do.

Scott's film at times reaches the realms of sci-fi wonder

Although Rapace gets top billing, Charlize Theron is the big star name here, playing a lean, mean corporate dominatrix. But the script and Scott weigh things heavily in favour of Michael Fassbender's android David (no spoilers; it's clear from the beginning that that's what he is). As the cryo-sleeping crew head towards a previously unknown planet, prompted by the amalgamation of celestial markers discovered throughout the ages of mankind, David wiles away the years as he curates his human cargo, referencing David Lean's *Lawrence of Arabia* and modelling himself, hair, voice and all, on Peter O'Toole's mannerisms. Do androids dream of electric Lawrences? Can a robot have something akin to a soul? Or is it a case of "choosing to believe", as Rapace's Dr Elizabeth Shaw does, in a supernatural creator?

It's clear that this is what interests the Scott of *Blade Runner*, as does the horror of bodily invasion and the sort of terminal sexual violation the *Alien* franchise is famous for. There's plenty of that here, courtesy of some truly gut-churning moments amid all the visual magnificence. Clearly, most of the crew are surplus to requirements, and plenty of oozing, writhing, repulsive piercings and invasions ensue. You're almost glad, though, so asinine are some of their actions as supposed top-flight scientists (the Scottish geologist makes *Trainspotting*'s Begbie look like a neuro-surgeon). It's the script and the ill-conceived characterisations it affords the actors that almost sabotages this dark flight into the stars.

Being the seasoned celluloid master that he is, Scott has been quick to deny that *Prometheus* is a prequel to *Alien*, which was always a one-off. The spin-offs are James Cameron's, not Scott's. *Prometheus* does answer some of the questions posed in the original *Alien* – for one: who that starman is, seemingly organically growing into his gigantic telescope.

As a film, it has moments of greatness. When Scott's vision transcends the script, *Prometheus* reaches into the realms of sci-fi wonder, which is what I wanted to see. At least some of the time, I wasn't disappointed. But too often the script's inane expositional nature gets a stranglehold and Scott's imagination becomes chained to it.

The film was shot in "genuine" 3D, but I confess it totally passed me by. The sheer scale of Scott's conception, in which every picture tells the story, means that Scott doesn't need 3D.

Is it terrifying? No. Is it entertaining? Yes. Is it visually magnificent? Yes. Is it a masterpiece? No.

Over 30 years on and the studios have little patience for big budget films that require, well, a bit of patience. Scott has spent much of his energy here trying to circumvent the unspoken laws of the studio gods and big-screen outings: that we are all stupid; that things have to be explained to us as if we were two-year-olds; that we all have the attention spans of goldfish. And yet, and yet… there are moments when Ridley Scott succeeds magnificently, illuminating the screen in a defiantly Promethean way.

Nick Čirkovič

Fortean Times Verdict

DESPITE A DAMP SCRIPT, SCOTT CREATES SOME ON-SCREEN FIRE **7**

Dark Star

Dir John Carpenter, US 1974
Fabulous Films, £11.99

There's something odd about how crisp and clean John Carpenter's debut film *Dark Star* looks on this Blu-ray release. Part of the appeal of this hand-made lo-fi sci-fi was always (at least to me) its scruffy appearance. It seemed suitable, somehow, to a tale of truckers in space that the film itself should be less than pristine. While not up to the standards of new films on Blu-ray, this is the best (for good or ill) this film has ever looked and sounded.

Expanded from a student project, *Dark Star* was co-created by writer-actor Dan O'Bannon and director-musician John Carpenter. While Carpenter went on to bigger (but not always better) things, O'Bannon never quite fulfilled his promise (despite his involvement in Ridley Scott's *Alien*, the unmade Alejandro Jodorowsky version of *Dune*, and the original *Total Recall*). The movie works as the anti-*2001: A Space Odyssey*, as a team of burned-out space jockeys seek out and destroy 'unstable planets'. An accident leads to a philosophical discussion with an intelligent bomb, leading to a *Dr Strangelove*-inspired climax. It's offbeat and weird, packed with subtle (and not-so-subtle) laughs, mixed with special effects that just about get the job done.

A two-hour (longer than the main feature, which comes in theatrical and director's cuts) documentary, *Let There Be Light: The Odyssey of Dark Star*, explores the origins of the film, its expansion to feature length (including the addition of the infamous 'beach ball' alien), and the respective contributions of O'Bannon and Carpenter. Oddly, Carpenter appears not to have co-operated in this project – he's represented in an audio-only interview excerpted throughout.

This is an excellent package for those who know the movie, and a great introduction for those new to the (cleaned-up) charms of *Dark Star*.

Brian J Robb

Fortean Times Verdict

A SPACED-OUT ODYSSEY THAT STILL IMPRESSES **9**

Demons/Demons 2

Dir Lamberto Bava, Italy 1985/1986

Arrow Films, £24.99

Picture a noisy, hyperactive kid who constantly screams in your face and spits food in your eye. If that kid were a movie, he'd be *Demons*, the 1985 film directed by Mario Bava's son Lamberto and penned by horror giant Dario Argento. Argento's influence is felt early on when a naïve young music student arrives in Berlin. She's stalked by a mysterious man in a chrome mask who is giving away free tickets to the Metropol, an art deco cinema tucked away in the backstreets of the city. She and her friend decide to skip music practice and go. The freebie turns out to be a horror film which spills over into real life. And when a prostitute in the crowd accidentally cuts herself on a prop mask in the foyer, the demons from the film start to possess the audience.

The film-within-a-film, alongside the notion of horror movies inspiring violence, is an interesting postmodern nod to the video nasties panic of the era; but a think piece this ain't. Once the demons arrive, it's a balls-out, comic book, gore-fest. Sergio Stivaletti outdoes himself with all manner of imaginative grue, from the growing fangs that painfully dislodge the victim's real teeth, to a truly insane moment where a demon pops out of someone's spine. There's a gleeful sense of fun about it all. Yet, unlike Peter Jackson's similarly OTT, but quite different, *Braindead*, *Demons* never knowingly slips into comedy and always maintains a sense of genuine scariness.

A lot of that is down to the demons themselves, and a design that remains unique even today. With their disgusting teeth, green, vein-covered skin and insane energy they feel much less predictable than their closest relations, the zombies. What's even more sinister is the way they seem to be part of a bigger demonic plan. For example, the exits to the cinema are suddenly filled with cement, and the automated projection booth has been preprogrammed. The audience has been brought here specifically to be demonised. This conspiratorial edge to the action gives the film a great sense of menace.

My favourite moment? There are many. Anything the pimp does or says; he's hilarious. The Claudio Simonetti soundtrack? Or the double ending? Perhaps the real highlight is the moment when the demons appear in a smoky corridor, eyes blazing. It made the movie poster, and it's up there with the most iconic horror images.

Demons 2 is a less imaginative retread of the original. Oh, it has some new ideas, but just listen to them: a demonic dog, a tedious *Gremlins*-inspired mini-demon who terrorises a pregnant woman, and the hilarious fact that the demons have learned how to abseil, head first! Still, it's fun in its own way, and kudos to Arrow Films for giving both films the gold star treatment, particularly in terms of picture quality; pus and blood never looked so sticky.

Rev. Peter Laws

Fortean Times Verdict

A HORROR CLASSIC AND ITS LESSER SEQUEL ON BLU-RAY **8**

Tape 407: The Mesa Reserve Incident

Dir Dale Fabrigar / Everette Wallin, US 2012

G2 Pictures, £12.99

The Blair Witch Project has a lot to answer for. The law of diminishing returns kicked in for the 'found footage' film genre some time ago, yet cheapjack moviemakers still persevere with it, because as a 'style' it can be achieved with affordable equipment. Most of these films fall down on screenplay and performance: *Tape 407* is, unfortunately, no exception.

A pair of whiney sisters who seemingly capture their entire lives on videotape are involved in a plane crash. The survivors are then stalked by something nasty in the woods; instead of running and hiding, these dim-witted protagonists proceed to videotape everything. The fortean twist here is that the crash survivors are caught up in a government experiment gone wrong: a revived dodgy dinosaur is on the loose, and he's hungry! Yes, it's that silly, but falls way short of the 'so bad it's good' category.

Brian J Robb

Fortean Times Verdict

FOUND FOOTAGE + DODGY DINO. SO BAD IT'S, ER, BAD. **3**

SHORTS

THE REVENANT

(Universal Pictures, £12.99/£17.99)

Kerry Prior's 2009 low-budget zombiefest is well on its way to becoming a cult classic, having already scooped-up 18 festival awards to date. From the opening credits ('Wanko Toys Presents'!) there's a feeling this is going to be something special. Bart (David Anders – *Vampire Diaries*, *24*), a decorated war veteran, wakes up the day after his own funeral to find he's a revenant – a vague mixture of vampire and zombie. Teaming up with slacker best-mate Joey (Chris Wylde), they turn to vigilante crime-fighting to satisfy Bart's newfound need for blood. The comedy/horror hybrid usually breeds fairly mixed results, but here the blend is nigh-on perfect and, like the similar *Deadheads*, takes *An American Werewolf in London* as a worthy role model. Add elements of *Weekend at Bernie's* and the best (and most copious) vomiting scene since *Team America* and you have a highly entertaining film. **Tim Weinberg** **8/10**

THE WATERMEN

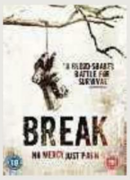
(Chelsea Films, £12.99)

THE WATERMEN

Of the two mysterious packages sent from Fortean Towers (with no accompanying info!), *The Watermen* turns out to be marginally better, although we all know the drill by now: bored (and boring) city types go where they ain't supposed to… and die horribly at the hands of mental locals. In this case, they are dismembered alive by our titular villains, who are "chopping people up and selling them for bait". One blogger volunteered this review: "One word, horrible." I can think of two more, but they wouldn't get printed here. **TW** **3/10**

BREAK

(Trinity X, £12.99)



Break ploughs similarly well-exploited furrows; it's just worse. Four girls on a road trip get raped, tortured and murdered by space lobsters… Only kidding; it's mental locals again. Do I need to add the acting's dire and the dialogue worse? Although this is a German production (as the accents reveal), director Matthias Olof favours a country soundtrack and tries to pass off Oberammergau as Canada. Weird. **TW** **2/10**

ABSENTIA

(Second Sight Films, £12.99)

When Tricia's husband Daniel has been missing for seven years, she can finally declare him legally dead "in absentia" and try and move on. But Tricia begins to have disturbing visions of Daniel, while her returning sister Callie finds that a spooky foot tunnel is linked with other mysterious local vanishings. Mike Flanagan's independent, low-budget horror film is a wonderfully fresh effort, free of genre clichés and boasting excellent performances from its two female leads. It's also nicely unsettling and determinedly oblique, veering from the psychological to the metaphorical to the supernatural (in a way that evokes both Ambrose Bierce and Richard Shaver) so as to keep the viewer constantly wondering just where it's going next. Ignore the awful cover art – this is a grown-up horror story, and highly recommended. **David Sutton** **8/10**

Diablo III

PC/Mac £44.99, Activision/Blizzard Entertainment

I'm a *Diablo* virgin. There – I confess. Knowing what a potentially addictive personality I have, I steered well clear of *Diablo I* and *II* for years (never mind *World of Warcraft*). Blizzard, you're evil! But finally I have succumbed. Well, it's a PC-only game after all, and they need all the championing they can get. There is something about all those keys to play with that seems to give designers a creative, vision-expanding nudge that the fiddly physical strictures of a gamepad layout doesn't. Maybe I'm wrong about that, but I can never quite shake the feeling that I am playing the piano with a dedicated PC keyboard game and a penny whistle on a gamepad. What makes *Diablo III* so maddeningly addictive is the way it seduces you into unremitting forward momentum, wielding your mouse in a blood-splashed click-and-slash dispatching of the undead.

The RPG element with its customisable skill elements has as many permutations as the numbers on a Euro Millions ticket. Be you Barbarian, Demon Hunter, Monk, Witch Doctor or Wizard, the array of options for advancement, trading loot, honing skills or crafting ever-better weaponry appear countless. Like any great RPG, it also has a wonderful looping soundtrack, with main themes which – despite endless repetition – never seem to pall. The plot and the script aren't going to give George RR Martin sleepless nights; but we can extend them the benefit of the doubt and say they are knowingly retro. Fantasy fans like an air of the familiar; we are of course not worlds away from *Warcraft*, *Neverwinter Nights* and *Dungeon Siege*. And the plot does propel you forward, setting up one quest after another amid the ongoing arc of the world of Sanctuary. It's 20 years after the events of *Diablo II*, but the Worldstone that protected the inhabitants from both Heaven and Hell has now been destroyed, opening the doors to evil once more. You know the drill…

The gloomy netherworlds of dingy dungeon discovery and gloom up top are offset by the brilliant flashes of battle magic and blood. Health orbs randomly dropped by dead enemies speed up gameplay and allow a fluidity that makes sense when complacency can often come a cropper. The single-player campaign has more than enough mileage in it to keep you occupied for a good 20 hours.

And online? Much complaint has been made about Battle.net and the DRM necessity of being online to access the single player game, never mind the co-op mode; yet in a world of pirates, the logic is there. But as I said, I have an addictive personality; so I'll just remain a Demon Hunter on the hard drive, keeping my distance, as is the wont of my class, while I kill, kill, kill the monstrous minions with ever more refined weaponry.

Nick Čirkovič

Fortean Times Verdict
DIABOLICALLY ADDICTIVE, DEMON-HUNTING FUN **7**

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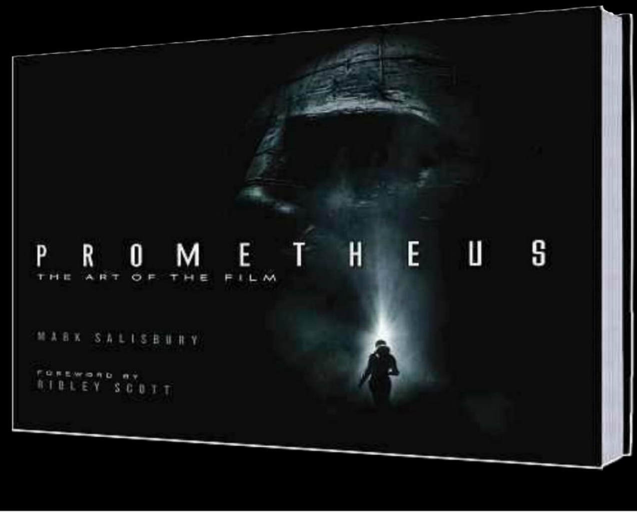

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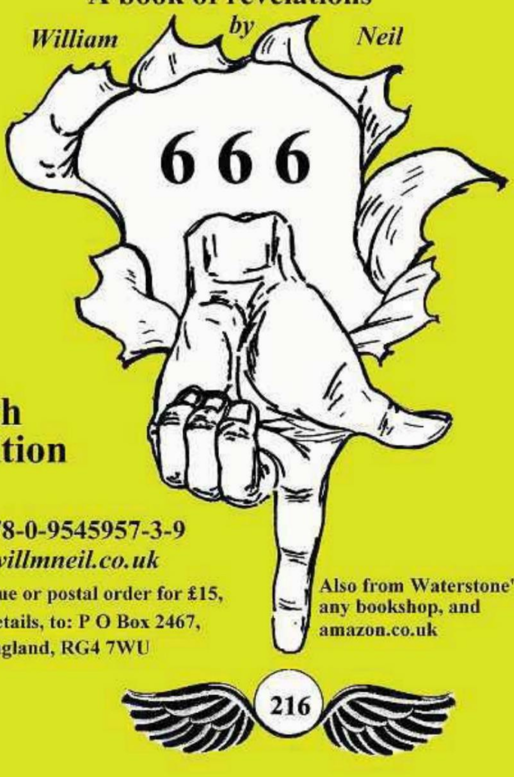

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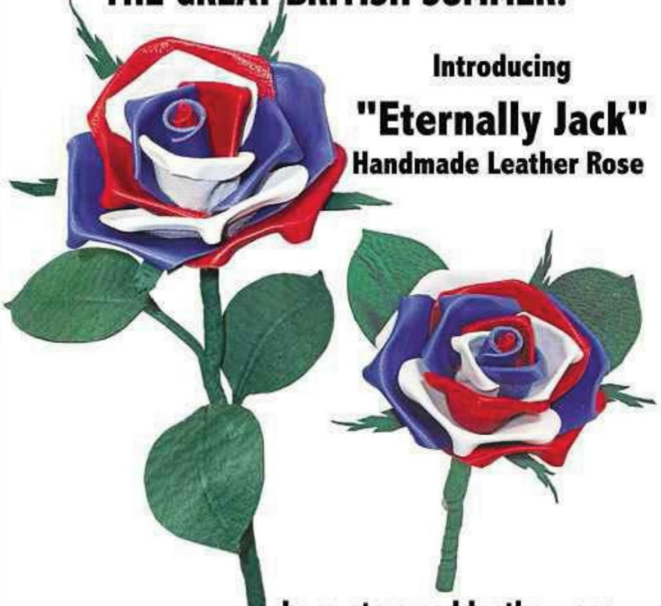

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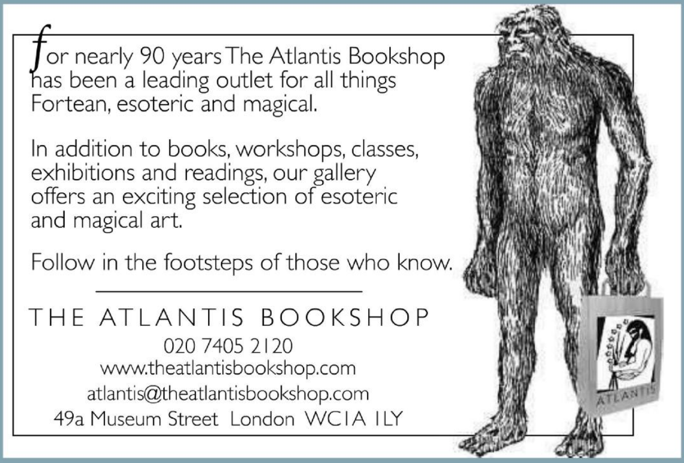

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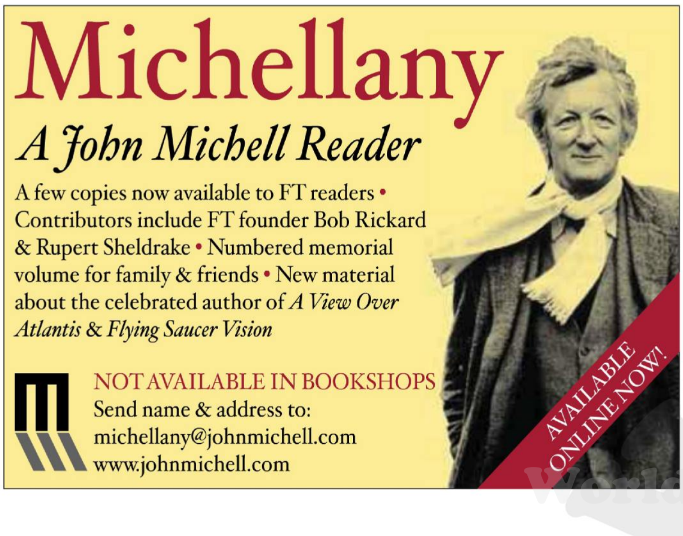

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Dear FT...

letters

Types of radiation

While the exposure of the US embassy in Moscow to microwave radiation that took place in the early 1960s [Konspiracy Korner, **FT287:21**] certainly coincided with illness and reports of birth defects, it is difficult to actually say whether it's a case of correlation or causation. Extensive research in the subsequent 50 years has failed to turn up a convincing link between microwave exposure and cancer or other ills.

Much of the fear and concern about microwave radiation comes from confusion about the term 'radiation', of which there are two types. There is ionising radiation, the stuff of radioactivity produced by the spontaneous decay of unstable atoms in radioactive materials, such as uranium and plutonium, which sends out high energy sub-atomic particles. This can cause serious damage to cells and the DNA in them, leading in high doses to radiation poisoning, and in lower doses to an increased cancer risk.

The other kind is electromagnetic radiation, which does not involve destructive high-energy particles. The electromagnetic spectrum includes light, heat, radio waves and microwaves; these do not have the destructive capacity of ionising radiation, having much lower energy. In fact, microwaves are lower energy than light waves, or indeed the heat radiated from an electric fire. Both phenomena are called radiation simply because they radiate from things. The reason to check your microwave ovens for leakage is not because of the cancer risk, but because microwaves heat things from the inside out, and if you are standing next to a microwave that is both on and leaking, you can receive very serious deep tissue burns before you even notice that they are taking place.

Ian Simmons
Newcastle, Tyne and Wear

Grey light

Eric Fitch's description of a 'grey light' shining in front of a high-flying aeroplane [**FT288:74**] sounds familiar. We live between Stanstead and Luton airports and under one of the main air corridors for high-flying planes, so there's always lots of planes around. Occasionally a plane will fly over preceded by a 'grey light', as described by Mr Fitch. It only seems to happen early in the morning or in the afternoon, if the plane is travelling directly away from the Sun and is at the same level as the Sun's apparent altitude in the sky. It looks quite spooky but in fact the 'tractor beam' is actually the plane's elongated shadow being projected directly in front of it by the low Sun. Maybe this explains Eric's sighting as just a trick of the light.

Joe Hoy
Bedfordshire

I've seen Eric Fitch's strange beam of 'grey light' a few times over the years, and once I knew what to look for it was always when the shadow, the plane and the Sun were aligned, usually in the late afternoon/evening, when the Sun was low in the sky, and when the sky was clear – although I imagine the plane must be flying through 'wispy' clouds for the shadow to show. I must admit it is a very curious sight.

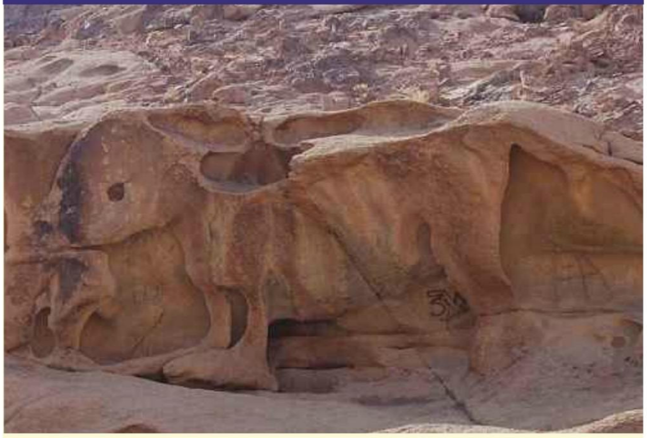
George Brown
By email

Out to get you

In the story on the Norwegian massacre [**FT281:23**], psychiatrist Lars Davidsson was quoted as saying: "It's most likely [Anders Breivik] is delusional. However, it is more usual for a psychotically deluded person to claim things that most people would consider outside the bounds of possibility, such as direct instructions from God or to think the CIA is trailing them." Hang on – so the CIA trailing someone is considered to be outside the bounds of possibility? Surely an intelligence agency would be doing a lot of exactly that. So, if you're unfortunate enough to actually be of interest to the CIA and try to tell anyone, you will be assumed to be crazy because such things never happen. It must be convenient for shadowy international spy organisations to have psychiatrists perfectly happy to commit anyone who might be a problem for them but don't warrant a proper 'disappearing'.

Chris McLean
By email

Simulacra Corner



Carl Schalck spotted this rock-weathered formation at the bottom of Mount Sinai in Egypt, scene of the biblical "Golden Calf" incident (Exodus 32).

We are always glad to receive pictures of spontaneous forms and figures, or any curious images. Send them to the PO box above (with a stamped addressed envelope or international reply coupon) or to sieveking@forteantimes.com – please tell us your postal address and we'll send you an exclusive ***Fortean Times*** *gift.*

Old dogs and buried alive

- Regarding old dogs [**FT288:20**], the chapter on dog cemeteries in my book *Amazing Dogs* mentions two very elderly canines. 'Jennie Gregory', a dog buried at the Duchess of York's dog cemetery in Oatlands Park in late Georgian times, was said to have been 26 years old. There are several verified modern instances of dogs living until their late 20s. According to a letter to *The Times* (23 December 1937), one of the headstones in the late Lord Ystwyth's private dog cemetery in Tanybwlch near Aberystwyth had the simple heading 'Coronet, aged 30'.
- If the unfortunate Sri Lankan Janaka Basnayake, who perished while trying to set the record for the longest time buried alive [**FT288:27**], had been a closer student of my book *Buried Alive*, he would probably have refrained from such rash activities, since the record already standing is an impressive one. In the 1890s, the Russian nobleman Count de Karnice-Karnicki was marketing a security coffin of his own invention, with a permanent air supply, and a flag and a bell above ground that could be triggered if its inhabitant was not quite dead. In Turin, the Count arranged for the 78-year-old Faroppo Lorenzo to be buried alive in his coffin on 17 December 1898. When dug up again on Boxing Day, Faroppo's immediate comment to this dismal underground Christmas holiday was that it had been damned smelly down there.

Jan Bondeson
Cardiff

Wired for God?

In the second part of his article "Wired for God?" [**FT287:38–43**], Charles Foster repeats uncritically the suggestion that the brain's hyperactive (or hypersensitivity) agency detection device ('HADD') inherited from prehistoric times provides an explanation for contemporary experiences of apparitions and poltergeists. In fact, the HADD hypothesis does nothing of the sort, and frankly this piece of evolutionary myth-making should be laid to rest until proof for any of the postulated scenario turns up.

We are asked to imagine that in the 'Upper Palæolithic' (or some earlier time period in other versions) an archaic human ancestor supposedly escaped a sabre-toothed tiger (or other unnamed predator) near a postulated lake by detecting a rustling in some unidentified clump of bushes, causing the prehistoric hunter or hominid to flee the scene. It then presumes that the Palæolithic hunter and many others of his tribe (or species, depending how early you imagine this incident occurred) also had this trait in sufficiently large numbers to leave the local predators hungry and pass on the HADD gene or genes to his offspring, carried by some unidentified element of the hominid genetic code. We are then expected to imagine that this unidentified gene or sequence of genes was replicated in DNA coding for subsequent descendants for thousands of years, spreading across the human species worldwide. Now it pops up again in some (again unexplained) way causing modern humans to hallucinate grey ladies in ancient castles, phantom monks, ruined abbeys and poltergeists in domestic dwellings. Can anyone provide any proof for this fanciful claim?

The whole scenario appears unfalsifiable at all key stages, which, following the philosophy of Karl Popper, is a sign encouraging the view it should be treated as a pseudo-scientific explanation, containing many unverifiable and unknown assumptions and elements. Currently, I see even less reason to believe in a genetically-transferred disposition in the brain to experience apparitions stemming from prehistoric times than for any hereditary basis for human features and tendencies such as intelligence, business acumen, alcoholism or crime. Indeed, any propensity causing complex hallucinations would surely be a liability to a creature, not an evolutionary advantage.

To be fair, all Charles Foster does in his article is invite the reader to "imagine" – but if that is the standard for the inherited HADD hypothesis as an explanation, then Arthur C Clarke's alien monolith in *2001: A Space Odyssey* provides just as plausible a notion for the origin of human consciousness.

More pertinently, the whole idea is derived from a fundamentally mistaken view of how people behave today when having an apparitional experience and the circumstances in which they occur. Put simply, most people experiencing a ghost do not take to their heels and run off like the imaginary ancestor or ape-man. There is a good reason – many of them are actually in bed at the time.

Statistical evidence collected from the 19th century onwards indicates many apparitions are encountered when witnesses are either in bed, or in the process of waking up or going to sleep. Such a connection was demonstrated in the *Census of Hallucinations* (1894) conducted by the Society for Psychical Research, and which remains the largest survey undertaken. Typically, witnesses do not make any attempt to escape, other than perhaps burying their head under the blankets. In a study entitled 'Six theories about apparitions' published in 1956, Professor Hornell Hart found that 69 per cent of apparitions occurred in conditions conducive to sleep (see *Proceedings of the SPR* vol.50, 153–239). This pattern again showed up in a survey by Andrew MacKenzie for his book *Ghosts and Apparitions* (1982), demonstrating that about one third of apparitional experiences occurred just before or after sleep, or when the percipient was in a state of relaxation. Similar results have been reported for other such experiences – e.g. "Survey of claimed encounters with the dead" by Erlendur Haraldsson, in *Omega: Journal of Death and Dying* (1988) 19, 103–113. Also, it is a key feature in many apparitional experiences that people do not realise until later on that anything anomalous has taken place.

The inherited HADD scenario also neglects the important role of culture in creating or modifying experiences. Many places we might consider "spooky" stem from cultural factors and conditioning, not some archaic inheritance being activated. As Ronald Binns pointed out in *The Loch Ness Mystery – Solved* (1983) "landscape is not sinister to a salmon or an otter." Interestingly, although graveyards are thought spooky in many cultures, as locations they generate very few apparitional accounts.

So I am afraid HADD in its current format doesn't even make it onto the list of plausible contenders for explaining ghost sightings. Many other explanations have been put up in recent years, including coffee, eye disease, radiation from mobile telephones and ultrasound. These do at least have the advantage of their premises being currently testable in some way. But don't worry if HADD is not up to the job, there will be another theory to explain ghosts along in a minute…

Alan Murdie
Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk

I read Charles Foster's two-part article "Wired for God?" [**FT286:42–47**, **287:38–43**] with great interest and look forward to reading his book. Initially I was impressed, but after a second reading problems emerged; what follows is only some of them.

Foster argues for a a tendency to overstate the commonality between what he calls 'genuine' spiritual experience and those generated by drugs and extreme practices; but he then rather overstates the differences. For instance, he notes that the spiritual experiences induced by mainstream religious traditions don't give you a bad trip. Really? I reckon that the various saints and ascetics who had visions of hell and damnation, or even visited the nether regions, had pretty bad trips.

He also says that: "while 'genuine' experiences are fairly uniform, drug-related experiences (for instance) are not." But, as he notes, different drugs interact with different receptors, so a range of neural and biochemical pathways are involved. This, with varying cultural expectations, means that the detailed outcomes arising from the use of different drugs are bound to vary. By comparison, the way he defines 'genuine' essentially guarantees the uniformity of experiences! But even ignoring this, obtaining religious experiences by drugless methods (dance, meditation, self-denial, some diseases, etc.) presumably involves some chemical produced in the body. The choices for this role are limited, so the results will show more similarity than those induced by xenobiotics. I would suggest that it is the overall pattern that is significant rather than the detail of each outcome.

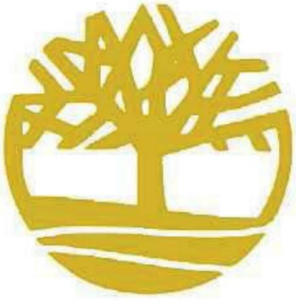
Although I have not seen the original work, I am also doubtful about the experiment of asking young children where rocks, plants and animals came from. They were given three choices: God, people, or no one knows. To be able to sensibly answer, they had to know at least who/what God is and what he/she/it is supposed to be capable of, even if they weren't from religious families. There is also no naturalistic option, so God is simply the most attractive answer.

Other than criticism of memes, the joint impact of culture and evolution doesn't get much of a discussion. But group activities like religion, making war or getting pissed do seem to serve as a cohesive social force beyond the bonds of kinship. Neither wars nor religions make much sense to a rationalist, but both have shaped societies. Also unmentioned are the admittedly controversial findings that religion can enhance health – which would give a definite evolutionary advantage.

The idea that spiritual experiences suggest that there is a God who wants to communicate with us suffers from one of the problems associated with the idea of Intelligent Design – the communicator/designer isn't very good at it.

Finally, I don't seem to have any concept of God in me. Does this mean I and others like me have a birth defect?

Ron Gardner
Ludlow, Shropshire



Timberland logo

The mystery object found by Gerald Sleeman [**FT288:73**] is the logo used by the clothing company Timberland. I suspect that its gelatinous state was due to the absorption of moisture while exposed to the elements. The transparent material and/or bonding agent used to attach it to textiles etc. is likely to be hygroscopic, hence it reverted to its original condition over time in storage.

Martin Gross
Hornchurch, Essex

I think it comes from a pair of glasses: most of the time, the Timberland logo is just printed on, but on some models, it's a small piece of metal and/or plastic fitted into the frame. The one on an old pair of glasses of mine has the same diameter as that of Mr Sleeman's – 4.5mm.

Claire Chemel
Paris

Editor's note: Thanks to all the other readers (37 and counting) who wrote in identifying the Timberland logo.

Were-baboons

Re Matt Salusbury's excellent "Short History of Dog-Headed Men" [**FT286:32–37**]: I think more could have been made of the difference(s) between the cynocephali and werewolves. Apart from shape-shifting, etc, werewolves have tails, whereas the dog-heads don't – which makes me think that it is werewolves that are misidentified baboons.

On 9 January, Channel 4 showed *Rogue Baboon*, a documentary featuring the dissection of a large male Cape Peninsula baboon – which looked a lot like a wolf/human hybrid, or a werewolf in the process of transformation. During the autopsy, the surgeons found old shotgun pellets that the baboon's skin had healed over.

Bobby Zodiac
Shipston-on-Stour, Warwickshire

No escape

I am from Singapore and I am experiencing a mysterious phenomenon. My neighbour living downstairs below my flat has a rare medical condition that have radiation all over his body. The radiation can extend as far away as the Moon. He is able to use this rare phenomenon to go inside my body and manipulate my body parts. He can do this over incredible distances even when I am overseas. He has a special gene that have this radiation all over his body. If you don't believe me you can ask him to go for a DNA test and MRI scan. I have reported this to the police and his mother and sister have also done likewise. I think this is the first of its kind in the world and you should be interested in this case. Please reply soon.

Ong Hock Ching
By email

Man from U.N.C.L.E.

The review of "The Return of the Man from U.N.C.L.E." [**FT288:65**] reminded me of a fanciful thought which crossed my mind when I read "Farewell to the Solway Spaceman" [**FT286:28–9**]. This described an encounter with two "men in black" who referred to each other as 'Nine' and 'Eleven'. From the second TV series onwards, Robert Vaughan's character 'Napoleon Solo' always wore a Number 11 badge when in the U.N.C.L.E. headquarters and the illustration which accompanies the DVD review shows Napoleon Solo and Illya Kuryakin in their customary black suits and ties. Maybe Mr Waverly had something to do with the Solway Spaceman?

Clive Harper
High Wycombe, Bucks

Midnight defended

I must admit to be being a bit disappointed with Tim Weinberg's DVD review for John A Russo's *Midnight* [**FT287:65**]. To give this gem of a movie one out of 10 seems quite mean-spirited. The movie was directed by the screenwriter of *Night of the Living Dead* and made for a paltry $40,000. It boasts a fine performance from the late great Lawrence Tierney as well as John Amplas (from George Romero's *Martin*). Add into the mix a family of Satanists, the scrubby Pittsburgh hillsides and a surprise racial sub-plot and you have a fantastic little reminder of those chunky VHS boxes and gloriously grubby video shops.

Colin Muir
Falkirk, Scotland

Youthful terror

I was fascinated to read your report on the Orang Minyak ("Oily Man") phenomenon of Malaysia [**FT287:12–15**], which reminded me of my weekly visits to the cinema in Ipoh, Perak State, where my dad used to take me to see Westerns. Occasionally, the trailers would include that of what I now know from the article to be the P Ramlee film *Sumpah Orang Minyak*, and I would be terrified. Though I was too young to know what the film was about, ever since then the term "Oily Man" has always had a much more sinister feel to me thant "Dracula" or "Frankenstein". Thanks for filling in this blank in my childhood!

Andy Sawyer
Liverpool

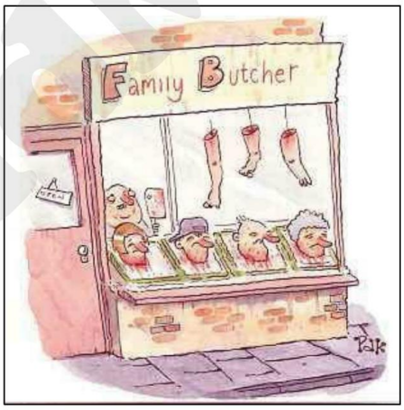
Titanic witnesses

Much of Carol Fenlon's article on the *RMS Titanic* premonitions [**FT287:30–35**] seems to be a summary of information in George Behe's book (admittedly out of print), *Titanic – Psychic Forewarnings of a Tragedy*. She doesn't seem to be aware of research performed in the 23 years since Behe's book was first published. For instance: George's updates at http://bit.ly/IGutvP (home.comcast.net). inform us of what he suspected in his book: that Eugene Ryan (who does not appear in the passenger manifest) was actually Eugene Daly, who uttered a premonition of disaster. Daly never mentioned his forecasts of doom afterwards, and herein lies the rub: unlike the "Ryan/Daly" prognosticator mentioned in the *FT* article, Daly did survive. Indeed, his letters and later testimony at the 1915 Limitation of Liability inquiry gives credence to the notion that an officer did shoot two passengers and then shot himself in the last few minutes of the *Titanic*'s life.

Another instance: Behe mentions in his book, and this is repeated in the article, that Esther Hart was convinced that disaster would befall the *Titanic*, stayed awake all night and slept during the day, as she was sure that doom would strike during the dark. However, the only source we have of this is her daughter Eva, and she frequently exaggerated certain aspects of the disaster, perhaps for personal glory.

Letters that Esther Hart wrote post-disaster have turned up and in them she mentions no feeling of dread or anxiety, no forebodings, nor any premonition. She certainly didn't stay up all night waiting for the disaster. I count George Behe as a personal friend and he told me around 1999 that when his friend Don Lynch was writing *Titanic: An Illustrated History*, Eva Hart's stories raised so many warning signs that her account was omitted from the book.

Dr Paul Lee
By email



PETER A KING

it happened to me...

First-hand accounts from *FT* readers and browsers of www.forteantimes.com

The Man in the Demob Suit

ETIENNE GILFILLAN

In September 1973 I was a senior NCO with the Army Cadet Force of the 1st Battalion Sherwood Foresters. We were stationed at the one-time RAF base at Jurby, on the Isle of Man. The history of the base goes back to the World Wars, but it had been abandoned by the RAF in the 1960s and had seen a variety of uses since then.

On the second Sunday of my stay, a few people from another detachment decided to have a go at calling up spirits in one of the billeting huts on the north side of the base as a bit of fun, as they thought. Perhaps they succeeded – but the result wasn't what they'd expected.

On that evening, the sky had turned what we could only describe as "blood red"; however, we put this down to September weather conditions. Later on that evening, the fog rolled in from the sea and covered the entire base.

I was on guard duty that evening and, as the guard commander, it was my duty to oversee base security. At 21.00 hours we received a report from a detachment commander that a billeting hut on the north side of the base had been ransacked from within. It had only been discovered when the detachment had returned from a nearby training area. What they found on entering the hut was considered to be so disturbing that a priest was called in to deal with it. They found that the beds had been turned upside down, chairs stacked in the middle of the floor and a wooden locker totally destroyed, with its contents scattered everywhere and the shards of wood put together in the form of a cross in the middle of the floor. I was ordered to put a cordon around the area and allow no one in or out until the situation had been dealt with.

However, things started to get even stranger as the evening turned to night and the fog I have mentioned rolled in over the base. By this time it was 23.00 hrs (11pm) and dark. At my part of the cordon, I noticed a figure approaching through the fog, and it wasn't until he got closer that I shone my torch towards him. It didn't seem to illuminate the figure but to go right through him. At this point, I challenged him to stop, which he did. I noticed he was wearing a grey double-breasted suit and a grey Panama hat which covered part of his face. It closely resembled a typical 1940s demob suit, which I found strange to say the least. I told him that he could not go through the cordon, to which he replied that he knew all about the situation and was making his way over to the married quarters. He asked if I had a cigarette. I offered him one, and he asked for a light. I could see the cigarette in his mouth, but when I lit the cigarette there was no face that I could make out – just nothing. I was so taken aback by this that I let the man through and watched him disappear into the fog.

"I could see the cigarette in his mouth, but when I lit the cigarette there was no face I could make out"

The following morning, I decided to follow in the same direction, toward the married quarters. What I found were the empty shells of buildings with broken windows – all that was left of what would have been the original married quarters.

I would like to trace anyone who was stationed at the base at this time and recalls the incident, or anyone who has had a similar experience with this ghostly gentleman on the island. My feeling is that he was a spirit of the wartime RAF base at Jurby, and his image has stayed with me since 1973 – so much so that I am planning to return to the island for the first time since then and hopefully find some answers.

Jonathon Derrett
by email

Inner voices

Ever since I was around 10, I have experienced what I can only describe as 'inner voices'. The feeling I attribute to hearing them is one of distance and detachment, almost as if I'm in a bubble and my surroundings are moving slowly. However, I am perfectly aware of my surroundings, lucid and calm.

The voices I can hear are audible enough for me to distinguish that one is most certainly a woman in conversation with someone else, but I can never make out what they are saying. The conversation

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We are always interested in reading of odd events and occurrences.
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is never directed at me, but I do get the sense that I should be aware of something, that they are intentionally talking in a way that I have no choice but to overhear. I also get the feeling of mocking towards me.

When the 'chatting' occurs, I am never frightened, only slightly bewildered. I can snap out of it quite easily by simply engaging with someone near me. I guess this has happened around 10 to 15 times in the past decade. The 'chatting' seems more prevalent when I am sitting at a computer or watching TV, a circumstance I feel is significant in explaining the phenomenon. Has anyone else had a similar experience? I'd love to know I'm not completely loopy!

Carly Stevens
By email

Toilet terror

We often used to go to a Thames-side pub in Windsor called the Donkey House. It was originally called the King's Arms, and had been there for, well, donkey's years. When we were children, my sister and I used to go there with our father for a lemonade after fishing trips. The pub is still there, but the name and management have changed.

One day in 2005, my sister Lesley and I had been shopping and wandering about the town and needed a drink. It was a normal Saturday afternoon in late spring and throngs of tourists were beginning to arrive.

We sat inside, to the left of the long, dark bar and away from the people eating, as we were smoking. We ordered a couple of pints of cider and, as usual, I needed to use the bathroom – it's a combination of my sister making me laugh and a weak bladder. As it was my round, I said I'd pop to the ladies first, then get the drinks in; so I rushed to the loo.

It was up a steep, narrow staircase at the opposite end of the bar. I went up the stairs, through a door, up another smaller set of steps that had a huge mirror overhanging them, through another fire door and into the loo. There were three or four cubicles. It was a really normal looking set-up, if a little out of date, pinkish and floral. All the doors were closed, so I had to push them to see if they were locked or not, but it soon became evident that I was the only person in there.

In the cubicle I was still laughing a little. All of a sudden I felt the need to stop, as if someone didn't approve, or I'd subconsciously been scolded. The atmosphere changed instantly – it felt electrified. My skin bristled, and I felt disturbed. I can only describe the feeling as being like the fear you might experience when faced with a huge growling dog or a crazed, drunken lunatic. I was shaking with adrenalin, experiencing confusing smells and images, and a sense of primal fear.

I had to get out, fast. I fumbled with the lock, tore open the cubicle, still rearranging my clothes. I didn't dare stay to wash my hands. I grabbed the door handle – and came face to face with the full-length mirror hanging over the steps. My face. But it didn't look like me. The face was terrified; there was confusion and a blur of movement behind me. I flew down the steps. There was another door to contend with, then the last furlong back to safety. My feet didn't touch the ground; if I'd fallen I wouldn't have felt any pain. I was fleeing for my life.

I smashed through the last door and into the bar, back to the warmth and the light and the living. People turned to see what the commotion was. I rushed to the bar and steadied myself. My sister called out, and when I failed to answer her she came over, looking perplexed.

"Christ, what's the problem with you? You look *awful*!"

"I don't know what just happened," I said, clearly shaken.

The barman came over. He'd sussed out the situation.

"You alright love? Same again? You look like you've seen a ghost".

"I – er, I don't know what just happened – upstairs," I said. My mouth was dry, my face was white. I looked into the mirror behind the bar and saw wide, staring frightened eyes.

"Oh, upstairs, the toilets. Yes, sorry about that. Are you alright?"

Then he went on: "Listen, next time you need the loo, use the disabled one down here. You don't have to go upstairs again. We've lost a few customers due to that, upstairs, in the ladies. Sorry about that. Want a brandy?"

My sister wanted the whole story, but I really didn't know what to tell her, apart from what I have described here. So we badgered the barman to tell us more. Some women had seen a man upstairs, others had felt the presence of a young woman and child. But that wasn't all.

The staff had regularly seen a man sitting in the farthest corner, after last orders were called, only to look over again to see that no one was there. This apparition had also appeared after the door was locked and the staff were cleaning up. During cashing up one night, a pint of beer had been thrown across the bar, and staff had reported other 'happenings'.

I haven't been back – but I bet the new management have relocated the ladies.

Ann Shenton
Windsor, Berkshire

Vortices

I saw a 'ghost' at the age of 11 or so [i.e. in about 1934] crossing the road in Wellesley Avenue, Richings Park Estate, Iver, Buckinghamshire. It was the spectre of a man and a dog. I was told others had seen it.

I was only three months in the Auxiliary Territorial Service during the war [WWII], as it was found I was often unwell due to having in effect three kidneys. My official discharge papers designate me as "not amenable to discipline". I was studying Euclid at the time, having missed out on so many mathematics lessons due to ill health. In the 1950s, I worked for the Association on American Indian Affairs in New York, my boss being the formidable La Verne Madigan, now deceased, alas.

In Bushey, Hertfordshire, on a bright and sunny evening in April over 40 years ago, I saw in the empty fireplace of the front room a vortex of mist and dust whirling around about the height of a human figure. This lasted for about half an hour. I didn't let my six-year-old son enter the room as it would have frightened him.

I would like to tell you about events in the house [in Bristol] where I now live. It was built in 1886, as were many of the quite large Victorian villas in this road.

One evening in 2008, I was in the front room watching a TV programme with a colleague, a former professional musician. At 9pm, a thick cushion-cover hanging on the back of the sofa rose up and deposited itself on the seat, exactly as if an invisible hand had moved it gently and deliberately from one place to another. There was no wind or draught at the time. Occasionally, objects do seem to move by themselves.

Some years ago, a very down-to-earth lodger – a young lady who belonged at the time to the Territorial Army – said that she had been frightened by seeing a figure, presumably a child, pass across the landing.

At about 6.30pm on 21 December 2010, I woke up in my armchair, having dozed off (I run an allotment and have a couple of piano students) to see the extraordinary sight of our now deceased cat, Harvey, who had been sleeping on top of the sofa against the central heating radiator, positively lit up like a Christmas tree. For about five to 10 minutes, his fur was a mass of twinkling lights – green, blue and pink – a fact of which he appeared to be totally unaware. I do harbour a considerable amount of static electricity. Do you think this has something to do with it?

At 3.30am on 13 May 2011, a day after my 88th birthday, I woke up to go to the bathroom and saw a man-sized object composed of twinkling lights some two feet [60cm] from my bed. (I sleep downstairs in the piano room.) As I organise a small philosophy group who no doubt consider me somewhat 'barmy', I remonstrated with the entity, saying that it shouldn't be here, at which point it disappeared.

At about 11am on 7 July 2011, I dropped a powder puff while sitting on my bed. Instead of just falling to the floor in an ordinary manner, it performed a vortex movement. I tried to repeat the operation, without success. Once again, there was no draught to account for this. Possibly there is an old coalmine underneath the house or some magnetic metal deep down, but I have no intention of digging under the foundations to find out.

Mrs Margaret E Roden
Bristol

FORTEAN TRAVELLER

80. Dr Dee in Třeboň

SIMON WILSON raises a glass in Kelley's Tavern as he retraces Elizabethan magus John Dee's wife-swapping travels in the Czech Republic.

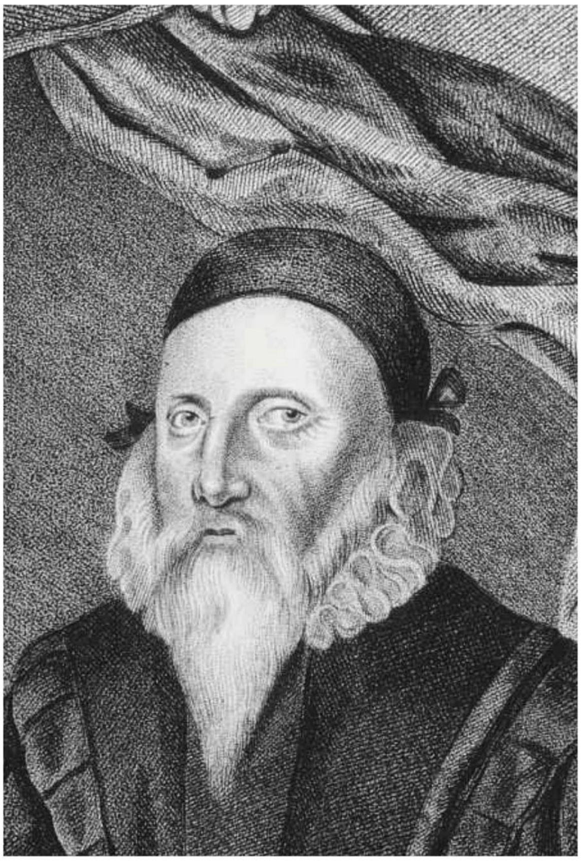
If most Czechs associate anything at all with Třeboň, it is probably the ubiquitous folk song "Okolo Třeboň" ("Around Třeboň"). That, and perhaps also the town's huge fishponds, which supply Czech tables with the traditional Christmas carp.

This is a sleepy place in a flat landscape. It's extremely pretty, to be sure, but pretty towns are not exactly rare in southern Bohemia. The elongated main square is beautiful, with its arcaded parades of colourful 16th- and 17th-century houses. The dusty side streets leading off the square, with their centuries-old tranquillity, are charming. There is even a Renaissance castle, around whose leafy park visitors are free to wander.

Travellers who have spent a pleasant week or so touring this part of the Czech Republic, however, may find that they are unable to discern anything truly distinctive about Třeboň. It resembles in so many ways other small towns in this part of the world.

But when night falls, the mists rise over the fishponds and wreathe themselves around the old town centre, sapping the houses of their colour. The visitor, hearing the eerie calls of the castle's peacock echoing over the rooftops, may begin to sense something unsettling, something hidden and mysterious about the place. Who could blame him if he turned his collar up against the chill and hurried to that cosy little pub just off the main square, where a fire burns on even the hottest day? If only there were not that strange hieroglyph over the door and the pub's walls were not covered in oddly significant mystical signs…

Would it help our traveller to know that here, in this out-of-the-way little town, men once talked with angels? Or that the angels taught a shocking new doctrine which contradicted all the teachings of the Church? And that the teachings were actually put into practice? Right here, in Třeboň?



GETTY IMAGES / HULTON ARCHIVE

ABOVE: Dr John Dee (1527–1608), in a portrait c.1580.

For it was here that Elizabethan magus John Dee, together with his sinister associate Edward Kelley, conducted his angelic conversations. And it was here that the infamous experiment in cross-matching occurred.

Třeboň, then, is a town where genuinely mysterious events took place which far outstrip, for instance, the threadbare riddles of a Rennes-le-Château. It is a place where the nature of belief is questioned and we are forced to confront our own distance from the mindset of the past.

Dee lived here between 1586 and 1589, a resident of the very same castle that can still be seen today. There, he and Kelley were employed by the immensely wealthy Wilhelm von Rosenberg to discover the secret of the Philosopher's Stone. Von Rosenberg even had an alchemical laboratory built to their specifications.

Dee's mission to Central Europe is shrouded in mystery from its very beginning and has never satisfactorily been explained. Astrologer, master of Hermetic philosophy and the Cabala, political analyst, owner of one of the largest libraries in Europe, Dee had risen to be advisor and confidant to Elizabeth I. He was decisive in inspiring England's imperial ambitions, and is credited with coining the term 'British Empire'.

Yet, on 11 September 1583, in a strange fly-by-night operation, he and a small entourage departed England for the Continent. He was not to return until November 1589, to find his house and his library ransacked and his influence at Court similarly devastated. His reputation was never to recover.

Was he embarking on a spying mission? Was he acting on the direct orders of the Queen herself? Or did he simply hope to find even more generous patronage abroad? One factor which should not be underestimated was Dee's careful study of the stars. Celestial developments had convinced him and many others that the world was entering a new age. As he travelled through Europe, he became certain that a new spiritual revelation was just around the corner – and that its centre would be Prague, capital of the Czech Lands.

Prague was a magnet for astrologers, alchemists and artists of all kinds; they were attracted by the eccentric and melancholic Holy Roman Emperor Rudolf II, patron of the occult arts, proponent of religious tolerance, and probably the most powerful man in Christendom. Dee arrived there on 9 August 1584, and soon began to announce his doctrine of spiritual revolution. One Czech contemporary later wrote that the magus "predicted that a miraculous reformation would presently come about in the Christian world and prove the ruin not only of the city of Constantinople but of Rome also. These predictions he did not cease to spread among the populace."[1]

What he preached was not the end of Christendom but a new revelation which would sweep aside both the Western Church (Rome) and the Eastern Church (Constantinople). The new flowering of Christianity would be centred on Prague.

Dee became a prophet of the new age to come, and the power of his conviction made him extraordinarily audacious. In a remarkable meeting

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with Rudolf in September 1584, he called on the no doubt astonished Emperor to repent his sins. If he were prepared to do that, Dee went on, his "Seat [would] be the greatest that ever was" and he would defeat the Turkish infidels forever. If he refused, the Lord would punish him. "This my commission is from God," he added.[2]

Unsurprisingly, Dee never met Rudolf again. The Emperor, however, remained tolerant of the Englishman, which was more than can be said of the Church. Even Rudolf was unable to resist the ecclesiastical pressure indefinitely, however, and in May 1586 he was finally persuaded to banish Dee. Only the intervention of von Rosenberg kept him in Bohemia, albeit far from Prague in obscure and provincial Třeboň.

Třeboň could never be a suitable centre for a general mystical reformation. What it in fact became for Dee is the site for an experiment in what he called cross-matching, but what we would call wife-swapping.

We may be struck by the contrast between Dee's high spiritual hopes in Prague and these rather more carnal events in Třeboň. Yet Dee came to see that there was no essential contradiction. Both the great religious reform and the doctrine of wife-swapping were mysteries revealed to him by God Himself, through His intermediaries the angels.

Dee had been employing Edward Kelley since 1582. He was not the first of Dee's skryers (or spirit mediums) but he seemed the best. Kelley would gaze into a 'show-stone' (a kind of crystal ball), interpret to Dee the figures he saw there, and relay their messages. Primarily he saw angels: Gabriel, Michael, Uriel, Raphael, Anael and others. The angels promised to reveal to Dee the mysteries of Creation. They promised revelations not to be found in the scriptures, messages direct from the Absolute, independent of any Church. As one angel told him, "Be of God, not of man." (*Diaries*, 222).

This was the substance of the Prague revelation: the transcending of all Earthly institutions, to become a vessel for new divine teachings. And it formed the basis of the Třeboň revelation, "this strange and new doctrine" as Dee called it (*Diaries*, 219). In April 1587, he was told, through Edward Kelley, that he and Kelley should share their wives, a revelation, as Dee himself said, which was "contrary to the laws of Moses, Christ, his Church, and of all nations" (*Diaries*, 219).

Dee was greatly afflicted by the injunction. He hoped that the message referred to spiritual communion, rather than carnal, and when he was assured otherwise he refused to obey.

The angels responded with almost classical statements of spiritual libertinism: "Behold you are become free… *Nothing is unlawful which is lawful unto God… For all things are possible and permitted to the godly*" (*Diaries*, 215–216). The messages were, in a way, merely extending the logic of the earlier revelations promising spiritual revolution. But transposed from the sublime heights of general reformation to the rather more bathetic level of common morality and human passion. At any rate, it was a logic which Dee, convinced that these were instructions from God, found impossible to resist.

On 3 May 1587, John and Jane Dee and Edward and Joanna Kelley signed a covenant swearing to put the new doctrine into practice. On 21 May, Dee wrote in his diary "Pactum factum" (*Diaries*, 223): they had consummated the pact.

They fulfilled their vows once, and never again. Nine months later Jane Dee gave birth to a boy, very possibly Kelley's son. He was named Theodorus Trebonianus Dee, "gift of God at Třeboň". Dee never seems to have doubted that God's will was being carried out.

He believed that the show-stone used by Kelley was sanctified by God Himself, and took scrupulous precautions to ensure that the messages were angelic and not demonic. But how could he trust Kelley? Dee's skryer has sometimes been dismissed as a crook, a schizophrenic or a psychopath, but, if anything, he resembles a tricksterish shaman: the question of the genuineness of such a figure's powers is less relevant than the quality of his performance and the effect it has on the people around him. And Kelley certainly provided Dee with what he wanted: knowledge not otherwise available to human beings.

It seems to me, however, that no

Here, Dee conducted his angelic conversations

ABOVE: Třeboň's main square, with its colourful old houses.

BELOW: Carved heads on the fountain in the main square of Třeboň.

SIMON WILSON

SIMON WILSON

definitive verdict can be delivered on the Třeboň revelations and the ensuing events. The questions of who believed what or, indeed, of the reality of the supernatural interventions must forever remain open.

At any rate, the cross-matching episode seems to have marked the end of Dee and Kelley's collaboration. Kelley departed, to earn a fortune as an alchemist, while Dee travelled back to England, to penury and obscurity.

Třeboň clearly has much to offer the fortean traveller, then. On a guided tour of the castle (only available in Czech when I was there) one visits a room dedicated to Dee and Kelley, and even an alchemical laboratory (tricked out with a profusion of animal skulls for some reason). Unfortunately, it is only a mock-up, the genuine laboratory having been in one of the castle's gatehouses. There is also no sign of the chapel adjoining Dee's chambers, where the skrying sessions actually took place and where the doctrine of cross-matching was revealed (with the show-stone apparently placed on the altar).

For a more atmospheric memorial to the Třeboň revelations one should head for the aforementioned pub, Krčma u Kellyho (roughly "Kelley's Tavern"). The mysterious sign above the entrance is Dee's *monas hieroglyphica*, designed to symbolise the unity of the Cosmos. Inside, the walls of the vaulted cell are adorned with symbols drawn from alchemy and other esoteric pursuits. Here is a place where mystic knowledge may be found (along with outstanding beer, piped Czech folk music and friendly waitresses).

Krčma
u Kellyho
SIMON WILSON

While one is in South Bohemia, one should also take the time to visit some of Dee's other haunts. Český Krumlov is not far, where Wilhelm von Rosenberg had his main seat and the castle's tower was once painted in colours of alchemical significance. The small town is, however, overrun with tourists: those wishing to escape the hordes should go to the little-visited Jindřichův Hradec, which Dee knew as Newhouse. Jindřichův Hradec's castle, where Dee dined in March 1588, is an even more impressive sight than Třeboň's.

South Bohemia is more than worth a few days of anybody's time. And when the mist swathes the small town of Třeboň, who knows if it may not again become the site of strange and new revelations? FT

TOP: Třeboň castle, where Dee lived and worked 1586–1589.

ABOVE: The entrance to Kelley's Tavern, with Dee's *monas hieroglyphica* visible above it.

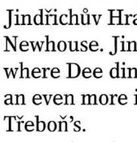
Notes

1 RJW Evans: *Rudolf II and his World: A Study in Intellectual History 1576–1612*, Thames and Hudson, 1997, p224.

2 Edward Fenton (ed.): *The Diaries of John Dee*, Day Books, Charlbury, 1998, pp142–144. All further Dee quotations are from this edition.

FURTHER READING

Benjamin Woolley: *The Queen's Conjurer: The Science and Magic of Dr. John Dee, Adviser to Queen Elizabeth I*, Henry Holt and Company, New York, 2002.



SIMON WILSON is a writer, researcher and English teacher. He is a frequent *FT* contributor, and is currently based in Munich, where he lives with Lise.

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Please send all submissions to David Sutton, Editor, Fortean Times, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1T 4JD, UK or email david_sutton@dennis.co.uk. As we receive a large volume of submissions, a decision may not be immediate. A contributors' guide is available. For the latest version of this please contact us on one of the numbers on the editorial page or consult our website at www.forteantimes.com.

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Books & periodicals for review

Send to: Reviews Editor, Fortean Times, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1T 4JD, UK. Send DVDs and games to the Editor, as above.

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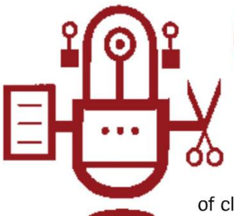

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Regular clipsters have provided the lifeblood of *Fortean Times* since it began in 1973. One of the delights for the editors is receiving packets of clips from Borneo or Brazil, Saudi Arabia or Siberia. We invite you to join in the fun and send in anything weird, from trade journals, local newspapers, extracts from obscure tomes, or library newspaper archives.

To minimise the time spent on preparing clippings for a Fort Sort, we ask that you cut them out and not fold them too small. Mark each clip (on the front, where possible) with the source, date and your name, so that we can credit you in the listing (right) when we use the material. For UK local and overseas clips, please give the town of publication. For foreign language clips, we appreciate brief translations. To avoid confusion over day and month, please write the date in this form: 8 May 2012. If you send photocopies, copy on one side of the paper only.

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Why Fortean?

Fortean Times is a monthly magazine of news, reviews and research on strange phenomena and experiences, curiosities, prodigies and portents. It was founded by Bob Rickard in 1973 to continue the work of Charles Fort (1874–1932).

Born of Dutch stock in Albany, New York, Fort spent many years researching scientific literature in the New York Public Library and the British Museum Library. He marshalled his evidence and set forth his philosophy in *The Book of the Damned* (1919), *New Lands* (1923), *Lo!* (1931), and *Wild Talents* (1932).

He was sceptical of scientific explanations, observing how scientists argued according to their own beliefs rather than the rules of evidence and that inconvenient data were ignored, suppressed, discredited or explained away. He criticised modern science for its reductionism, its attempts to define, divide and separate. Fort's dictum "One measures a circle beginning anywhere" expresses instead his philosophy of Continuity in which everything is in an intermediate and transient state between extremes.

He had ideas of the Universe-as-organism and the transient nature of all apparent phenomena, coined the term 'teleportation', and was perhaps the first to speculate that mysterious lights seen in the sky might be craft from outer space. However, he cut at the very roots of credulity: "I conceive of nothing, in religion, science or philosophy, that is more than the proper thing to wear, for a while."

Fort was by no means the first person to collect anomalies and oddities – such collections have abounded from Greece to China since ancient times. **Fortean Times** keeps alive this ancient task of dispassionate weird-watching, exploring the wild frontiers between the known and the unknown.

From the viewpoint of mainstream science, its function is elegantly stated in a line from Enid Welsford's book on the mediæval fool: "The Fool does not lead a revolt against the Law; he lures us into a region of the spirit where... the writ does not run."

Besides being a journal of record, **FT** is also a forum for the discussion of observations and ideas, however absurd or unpopular, and maintains a position of benevolent scepticism towards both the orthodox and unorthodox.

FT toes no party line.

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AUSTRALIA Graham Cordon (SA), Tony Healy (ACT), John Palazzi (NSW), Len Watson (Qld). **CANADA** Brian Chapman (BC), Graham Conway (BC). **CYBERSPACE** Richard Alexander, John F Callahan, Hugh Henry, Neil L Inglis, Michael Newton, Steve Scanlon. **ENGLAND** Gail-Nina Anderson, Louise Bath, Claire Blamey, Peter Christie, Mat Coward, Paul Farthing, George Featherston, Paul Gallagher, Alan Gardiner, Keith George, Anne Hardwick, Richard Lowke, Alexis Lykiard, Diana Lyons, Dave Malin, Nick Maloret, Valerie Martin, Tom Ruffles, Meryl Santis, Paul Screeton, Gary Stocker, Roman Suchyj, Frank Thomas, Paul Thomas, Nick Warren, Bobby Zodiac. **FINLAND** Heather Fowler. **FRANCE** Michel Meurger. **GERMANY** Ulrich Magin, Cliff Wren. **HOLLAND** Robin Pascoe. **IRELAND** Andy Conlon, Pat Corcoran, Andrew Munro. **ISRAEL** Zvi Ron. **NEW ZEALAND** Peter Hassall. **ROMANIA** Iosif Boczor. **SCOTLAND** Roger Musson, Leslie John Thomson. **SWEDEN** Sven Rosén. **THAILAND** Chris Williams. **TURKEY** Izzet Goksu. **USA** Loren Coleman (ME), Jim Conlan (CT), Myron Hoyt (ME), Dolores Phelps (TX), Jim Riecken (NY), Ron Rosenblatt (NY), Joseph Trainor (MA), Jeffrey Vallance (CA), Gary Yates (UT). **WALES** Janet & Colin Bord.

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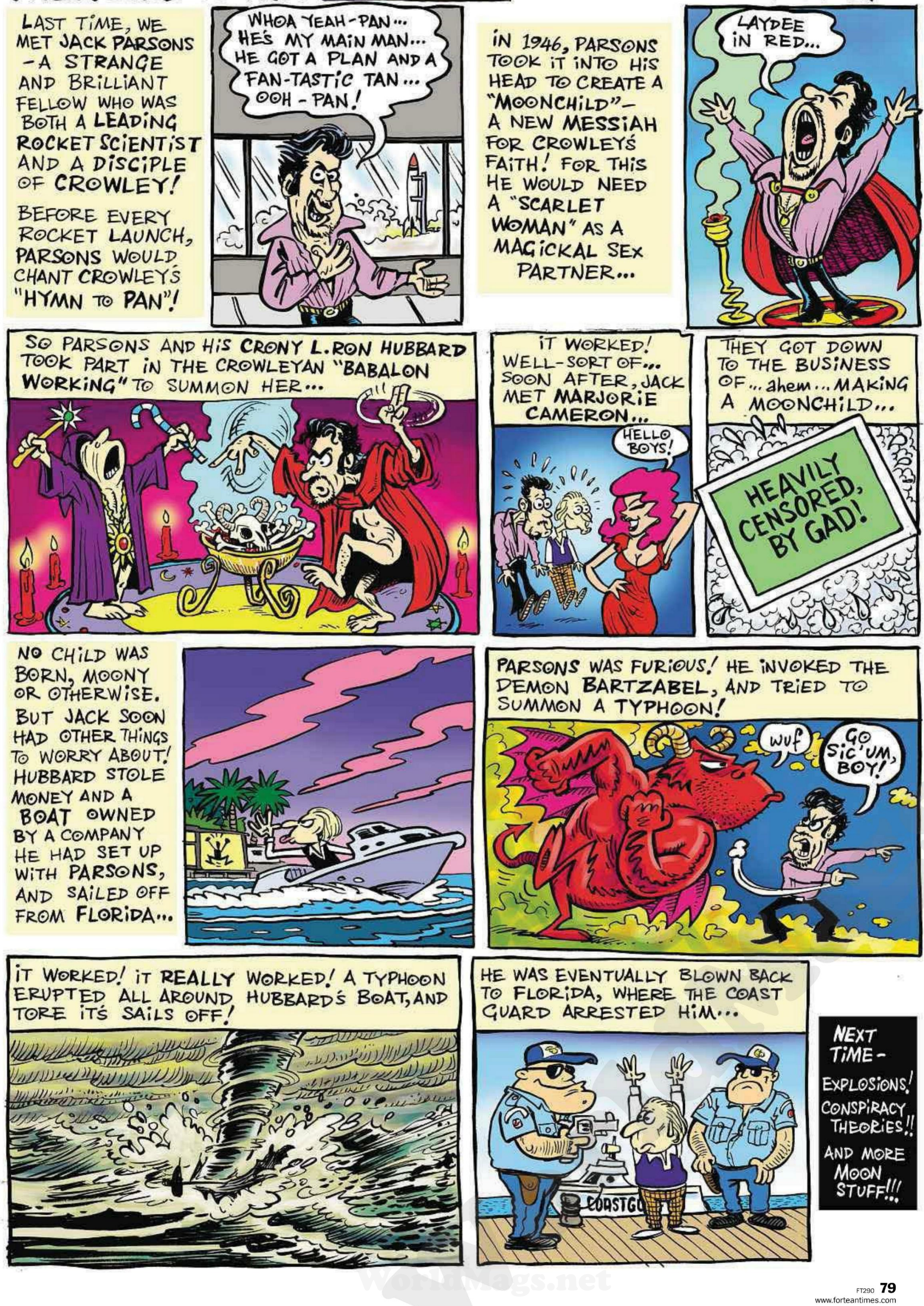
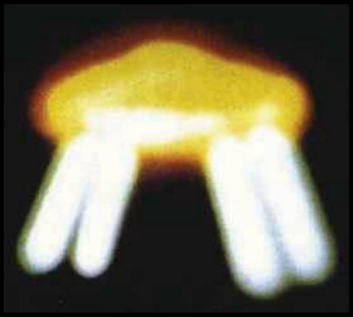
PHENOMENOMIX

JACK PARSONS pt 2

HUNT EMERSON and KEVIN JACKSON

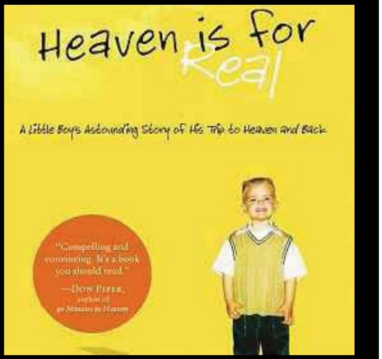

LAST TIME, WE MET JACK PARSONS – A STRANGE AND BRILLIANT FELLOW WHO WAS BOTH A LEADING ROCKET SCIENTIST AND A DISCIPLE OF CROWLEY!
BEFORE EVERY ROCKET LAUNCH, PARSONS WOULD CHANT CROWLEY'S "HYMN TO PAN"!
WHOA YEAH - PAN... HE'S MY MAIN MAN... HE GOT A PLAN AND A FAN-TASTIC TAN... OOH - PAN!
IN 1946, PARSONS TOOK IT INTO HIS HEAD TO CREATE A "MOONCHILD" – A NEW MESSIAH FOR CROWLEY'S FAITH! FOR THIS HE WOULD NEED A "SCARLET WOMAN" AS A MAGICKAL SEX PARTNER...
LAYDEE IN RED...
SO PARSONS AND HIS CRONY L. RON HUBBARD TOOK PART IN THE CROWLEYAN "BABALON WORKING" TO SUMMON HER...
IT WORKED! WELL - SORT OF... SOON AFTER, JACK MET MARJORIE CAMERON...
HELLO BOYS!
THEY GOT DOWN TO THE BUSINESS OF... ahem... MAKING A MOONCHILD...
HEAVILY CENSORED, BY GAD!
NO CHILD WAS BORN, MOONY OR OTHERWISE.
BUT JACK SOON HAD OTHER THINGS TO WORRY ABOUT! HUBBARD STOLE MONEY AND A BOAT OWNED BY A COMPANY HE HAD SET UP WITH PARSONS, AND SAILED OFF FROM FLORIDA...
PARSONS WAS FURIOUS! HE INVOKED THE DEMON BARTZABEL, AND TRIED TO SUMMON A TYPHOON!
wuf
GO SIC 'UM, BOY!
IT WORKED! IT REALLY WORKED! A TYPHOON ERUPTED ALL AROUND HUBBARD'S BOAT, AND TORE ITS SAILS OFF!
HE WAS EVENTUALLY BLOWN BACK TO FLORIDA, WHERE THE COAST GUARD ARRESTED HIM...
COASTG
NEXT TIME - EXPLOSIONS! CONSPIRACY THEORIES!! AND MORE MOON STUFF!!!

COMING NEXT MONTH



THE SKY IS ALIVE

COULD UFOS BE THE BASIS OF A NEW SCIENCE OF AERIAL LIFE?



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TOURISTS IN PARADISE

HOLIDAYS IN HEAVEN AND VACATIONS FROM HELL

+

HOOP SNAKES, HOLY TERRORS, BLACK MAGIC CODE AND MUCH MORE...

FORTEAN TIMES 291

ON SALE 19 JULY

HUGO PIETTE

TALES FROM THE VAULT

EACH MONTH WE SEND *FORTEAN TIMES* FOUNDER BOB RICKARD DOWN INTO THE DARKEST, COBWEB-RIDDEN DEPTHS OF THE VAULTS OF FORTEAN TOWERS IN SEARCH OF STORIES FROM *FT*'S PAST.

JULY 1982

Carole Compton, a 20-year-old Scottish woman, had gone to work in Italy to be with the Italian man she had fallen in love with in her hometown of Ayr. Over several weeks, she worked in three different homes in which five fires and 'poltergeist' phenomena occurred. She put it down to bad luck. Then, in May, she found a job as a nanny in Rome caring for the children of the wealthy Ricci family. One day, a religious picture fell off the wall while Carole was walking past it, frightening a superstitious maid. When Carole accompanied the family to their holiday home in the Italian Alps, a fire broke out, ruining the whole upper floor. Over the next few days, there were two further fires, one a minor fire in a rubbish bin, and the other in the bedroom of the Riccis' infant son. The family became uneasy and Carole was told she was no longer needed, although she left them on friendly terms.

This fateful month, Carole obtained another nanny job, with the Tonti family, at their grandparents' house on the island of Elba. Fires broke out in odd places, disturbing scratching sounds were heard, and art objects fell over or crashed to the floor, often in Carole's presence. The superstitious grandmother took a violent dislike to Carole, muttering the word *strega* (witch), and called the police. Carole had no idea what was happening as they took her to a prison at Livorno for interrogation before charging her with the attempted murder of the Tontis' child. Italian papers branded Carole a "witch" and a "sorceress".

Back in Britain, Carole's case attracted interest from paranormalist Guy Lyon Playfair and ASSAP's Dr Hugh Pincott offered to help Carole through her lawyer, as the disruptive phenomena seemed more like a kind of uncontrolled psychic or mediumistic or pyrokinetic ability rather than witchcraft. She was also visited in prison by Europe's foremost authority on poltergeist phenomena, Dr Hans Bender. However, Carole didn't want to prejudice her defence with anything 'paranormal', and denied that she had any psychical abilities. She simply couldn't understand how she could be an unconscious focus for the phenomena.

Carole was not brought to trial until December 1983, after 16 months in prison. Although she had no motive, had never been caught starting the fires, and always denied having done so, the prosecution maintained she was a liar and demanded a sentence of seven years' imprisonment. Forensic experts had tried to recreate the pattern of the fires without success, and one forensic scientist testified that a burnt mattress could never have been set alight in the way claimed, as it had unaccountably burned downwards, rather than up. There was no evidence of inflammatory substances and electrical wiring was not faulty. In the end, Carole was found not guilty of attempted murder, but guilty on two charges of arson, and one of attempted arson. She received a sentence of more than two years' imprisonment, but because of the time she had already spent in prison, the sentence was suspended and she was free to go.

In 1990 she published a book about her ordeal – *Superstition: The True Story of the Nanny they called a Witch* – which included evidence from experts who suggested she was the unwitting victim of a poltergeist. She is now married with a family and living in West Yorkshire. In 2003, the film *Superstition* was released, starring Charlotte Rampling and Sienna Guillory, based on Carole's story. Despite one or two interesting moments, however, it suffered from a basic lack of understanding of poltergeist and related phenomena and offered precious few insights into the case. **FT38:32–33, 39:28–30, 42:46–49**

JULY 1992

From an Islamic country I'd expect 'alien abductions' to be expressed in terms of the ancient lore about *djinn*, but this strange story is an odd cultural mixture. Muserra Togay, of Kadiköy near Istanbul, told police that her daughter Elif had been abducted eight days earlier by a man who called himself Erhan Kargi. He had "very strange eyes and an unusual accent" she said. Stranger still, he had shown her his palms, which were bleeding, and said his blood had healing powers. He told her he had "beamed down to Earth" and "could have anything he wanted". "I am afraid he has taken my girl to outer space," she cried. A police search for the man (or spaceman) failed to turn up any further information. My Internet search for 'Erhan Kargi' revealed that it was quite a common name. **FT65:10**

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